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# THE TOMMIEBEG SHOOTINGS

OR

## A MOOR IN SCOTLAND

BY

THOMAS JEANS

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PERCEVAL SKELTON*

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(AUTHOR OF "WILD SPORTS OF THE HIGHLANDS," ETC.),

TO WHOM I WAS INDEBTED

FOR MY FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THE NORTH,

AND WHOSE DELIGHTFUL COMPANIONSHIP

IT WAS MY PRIVILEGE TO ENJOY

IN MANY A WILD ADVENTURE OF FLOOD AND FIELD,

I inscribe this Volume.

T. J.

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# THE TOMMIEBEG SHOOTINGS;

OR,

# A MOOR IN SCOTLAND.

## CHAPTER I.

Of Mr. Samuel Brixey and Mr. Peter Fribbles, and the proposed visit to Stoke Newington.

It is at that season of the year when green peas are a drug, and when gooseberries of gigantic proportions, and cucumbers of alarming growth jostle one another with jealous rivalry in the columns of the newspapers—when the Hudson's Bay Fur Company's shares are at a discount, and Wenham Lake Ice scrip is bought up at fabulous quotations—when hostile Members of Parliament, who have abused each other daily, from the commencement of the session, shake hands and pair off like Siamese Twins—and when Ministers, harassed and worn out with dry discussions on the affairs of the nation in Downing Street, are looking forward with fond anticipation to discussing crisp white-bait and cool claret cup at Greenwich—the sun strikes hot upon the London pavement, and the foot passenger, whether bent on business or pleasure, courts the shady side of the street; the water-cart is dispensing its refreshing shower on the dusty roadway, and one is tempted to envy those nice little boys who are following close in its wake,

and, reckless of consequences, are playfully laying the dust upon each other's jackets—Happy innocence!

A hansom cab, dragged at a snail's pace by a tall, wiry, big-boned horse, pulls up lazily at the corner, opposite a doorway, on either side of which is delineated, in black and white, a cabalistic device called "The Chequers;" and here we would fain pause to inquire into the hidden meaning of this commonly adopted sign—we would know whether it has aught to do with the chequered existence of man, in general, or of those in particular who love to frequent houses bearing such an ensign. Is it allegorical of the certain drain on the exchequer of such as too freely enter those portals? But not to pursue these interesting speculations further, we will leave them to be taken up by "Notes and Queries," and return to the locomotive which brought us to the door suggestive of this digression. Its driver is lolling listlessly in his shirt-sleeves over the roof, and nods languidly, though approvingly, to the proposition made by an acquaintance of his, who is standing on the curbstone, touching the high temperature, and the sultry state of the atmosphere: the latter goes on to remark further, that it has the effect of making one "uncommon thirsty," and, as if in corroboration of this sentiment, he vanishes suddenly through the door above mentioned, whence he speedily emerges bearing a foaming pewter pot. This he hands silently to him of the cab, who, wasting no words, slowly raises it to his lips, nods over it to the bearer, hides his face behind it for a time, and then with a sigh delivers it to his friend, that he may go through the same ceremony.

It is past the middle of July, and the London season is fast drawing to a close. In the great thoroughfares, in the business streets, there is ever the same ebb and flow of life;

winter and summer, the stream of passengers rolls on without any sensible diminution in its volume, save what is caused by the substitution of the light and airy "registered five-ounce Alpaca" for the heavy sombre Poncho, or the rough bulky overcoat of a few weeks since. It is not thus in the streets west of Charing Cross—if any activity be visible there, it is manifested for the most part by those who are rushing about from place to place, from shop to shop, to complete their final arrangements, and make their last purchases before leaving town. Let us take a glance at Pall Mall—with the exception of one or two rather seedy looking individuals, lounging on the steps of "The Reform," and a brace of old gentlemen who are shaking hands with one another at the door of "The Travellers," for the last time before the one leaves for Kissingen and the other for Malvern—it is a desert. There is, to be sure, one well appointed brougham at "The Guards," and a young Crimean hero has just chartered a hansom from "The Flag."

The clock at St. James's Palace was striking three, when two gentlemen might have been seen (by anybody who happened to be looking in that direction) coming out of the "Megatherium Club." For some seconds they remained in eager conversation on the landing before the door, then slowly descending the steps they halted again on the pavement, as though to settle the point in discussion, and having apparently come to an amicable adjustment of the matter, proceeded, arm in arm, eastwards along Pall Mall.

The younger—we have observed that one of our most prolific novelists, whenever he introduces, as he often does, to the reader a pair of mysterious personages threading their way along a glade in the forest, begins inevitably with the

younger. The younger, who was also the taller of the two might have seen some five-and-twenty summers, whose genial warmth (despite the chilling influence of the same number of winters, which we suppose he had also witnessed) appeared to have drawn him up, much in the same way as we see a plant in a lofty greenhouse drawn upwards towards the light; and, like other animal and vegetable productions which have been forced, he had lost in under growth and strength what he had gained in height. He was a lank-leggy figure, and this he had not cared to improve by the adoption of a quiet style of dress. A particularly narrow-brimmed hat covered a small head of straight sandy hair, and afforded but trifling shade to a puffy sallow face, innocent of anything like whisker, but exhibiting where the imperial is usually worn a few straggling, reddish hairs. This, not to say interesting, head was kept at any elevated angle by an "all-round" collar meeting under his chin, and confined by a neckerchief of bright crimson network, which, passing through a big carbuncle ring, lost itself in the depths of a preternaturally long waistcoat of white towelling, with onyx buttons. This white expanse was relieved by a massive gold curb-chain, looped to a button-hole by a watch-key in the shape of a hunting-whip, and suspended from this was a bunch of "charms," consisting of miniature boots, boot-jacks, arms, legs, mice, fishes, &c., of coral, and coloured lavas. His coat was black, but unlike anybody else's coat—the waist very long, the skirts very short, the sleeves big enough for his body, and lined with scarlet. It was, however, in the clothing of the nether man that he came out strongest; and here, in like manner as it would be difficult to speak in terms sufficiently "loud" to describe this garment, so is the pen powerless to write its details. The general impression left on the

mind of the passer-by was that it was of a bright green, but a nearer inspection would have disclosed bars and stripes of every colour, marvellous to behold. We mention a pair of "Runcimans" of cunning and peculiar fashion, as well as a pair of primrose-coloured kid gloves, to complete the picture of this youth, whose name was Fribbles—Peter Fribbles.

As if to render more conspicuous the unusual length and slender dimensions of his companion, the figure of the older of the pair was in every way a contrast to it. He was a good-humoured looking, punchy, dapper little man, who might have weathered some fifty or five-and-fifty winters, which had not visited him too roughly, merely rounding off the angles, if ever he had any, and giving to his features a cheery Christmas glow, quite pleasant to look upon.

It may be objected that we do not give a minute description of this personage's dress, as we have done by that of his friend—now, it is not unworthy of remark, that, by some natural process, the costume generally adapts itself singularly to the wearer—whether it be that the character of the dress assimilates itself to the character of the individual, or *vice versâ*, but certain it is that they not unfrequently seem as though made for one another. There are sometimes incongruities—but these arise from accident or whim. Take, by way of illustration, that veteran beau, Sir Plumley Luffington; let him discard his wig—his "gentleman's invisible head of hair," as the advertisement has it—send him down into the country to rusticate, having first broken his bottle of "instantaneous hair-dye." Let the tailor at Little Ducklington take his measure; and then dress him up in the result. We put an extreme case, because we firmly believe that poor Sir Plumley, if he could

not dye his whiskers, would die himself outright under such a visitation. But suppose such a thing to be, we affirm that this metamorphosis would be a failure in effect. Sir Plumley Luffington could no more look like a respectable, elderly, country gentleman, than old Squire Tykes, travestied into "the man about town," could support the character decently for five minutes. Thus, the dress of Mr. Samuel Brixey was exactly what a middle-aged gentleman, of quiet unobtrusive habits, might be expected to wear. There was nothing remarkable in his white hat, any more than in his dark brown morning coat, with waistcoat, &c., to match.

The two friends walked at a quick pace, not exactly "pari passu," but with unequal strides, as may be conjectured from the extreme length of limb developed in the taller of the pair; he tried good-naturedly to keep the step, in the performance of which gymnastic he had very much the appearance of "marking time;" forgetting himself, however, every now and then, in the animated conversation they were holding, he obliged his ill-matched companion to take at least two paces to his one. Progressing thus along Pall Mall, they turned into the Haymarket.

It is an indisputable fact, that a cabman or an omnibus-conductor has, at any distance within the range of his vision, an instinctive recognition of a fare, nor did the driver of the vehicle we left standing opposite "the Chequers" form an exception to the rule; for, no sooner did Brixey and Fribbles appear round the corner, than that individual, who was still on his box, in familiar conversation with his friend, suddenly slipped himself into his coat, removed the short pipe in which he was indulging from his mouth, and replacing it with a straw, entered straightway upon a series of pantomime, indicative of a desire to attract

the attention of the two gentlemen on foot; as they drew nearer, he became more energetic, and his words, "Cab, your honour!" brought the friends to a stand-still.

"Fust rate oss, gents, fresh as paint—jist come out of the stable!" continued the man, observing the impression he had made, and accompanying the remark with a flick of his whip on some well-known raw, which woke up the poor beast from pleasant dreams of the loose boxes and five feeds a day of his youth.

"Do you know, my man," inquired Brixey, "such a place as Dedman's Rents—near Stoke Newington, is it not, Peter?"

"Yes," replied the latter, "here is the direction—Mr. Joseph Higgs, Dedman's Rents, Stoke Newington."

"Bill!—I say, Bill!" cried the cabman to his friend, who had withdrawn into the background, and was busily engaged, with the politeness peculiar to his class, in taking a comprehensive survey of Fribbles, with whose appearance he seemed vastly pleased, "You don't know where Dedman's Rents is—do you?"

"I should jest think I did—up Newington vay—vere Joe Iggs's is," was the reply.

"Higgs!" interrupted Brixey, "the very man we want to see—a dealer in dogs?"

"All right, sir!" said the driver. "Jump in, gents—here, you Bill, tumble up along o' me. Hold *up* then!"

The latter words were addressed to the horse, who, from stiffness or weakness, or both combined, very nearly came down, as he was jerked short round to begin his journey; being, however, painfully roused to a sense of his liabilities, by another playful cut of the whip across his ears, the animal dashed off at a rate which only cab horses can attain to in crowded thoroughfares, cutting in here in alarming proximity to a heavy dray, shaving the lamp-post there, and

threatening instant annihilation to terrified old ladies and angry elderly gentlemen, to each of whom the driver thought it incumbent on him to address some mild remarks on the folly of trusting themselves out alone in the streets, without "a nussery maid to take care of 'em."

The broad gauge of the City Road restored a degree of comfort to the inside passengers, but they had hardly time to congratulate themselves when, the horse's head being again turned northwards, they were entangled in a labyrinth of narrow streets, the inhabitants of which seemed to turn their minds principally to letting lodgings, turning mangles, rearing children, sweeping chimneys, and vending coals, potatoes, and pickled salmon.

The line of street gradually faded away as they proceeded, and presently the houses, which had some time since retired into narrow, black slips of garden, were succeeded by the shells of miserable tenements, abandoned in every stage of completion, and disclosing in their thin, half-mortared walls, the secrets of the comfortless system of cheap building. These, too, were soon left behind, and gave place to a wide, rough expanse of brickfield, whose monotony was broken only by a few straggling, melancholy ghosts of stripped elms, scattered thinly about, and waiting their turn to be swept away by the flood of the approaching city.

But before we proceed to record, in proper detail, the visit paid to Mr. Joseph Higgs by the two gentlemen, whose movements in that direction we have just narrated, the reader may most likely desire to know something about these individuals, and what was the nature of their errand to this remote suburb where dog-"merchants most do congregate." But this is too important a topic to be foisted in at the end of a chapter, and we shall therefore enter upon its discussion in our next.

## CHAPTER II.

How Mr. Samuel Brixey came to grief, and by what accident he was induced to take a Moor in Scotland.

It will, we think, be admitted by everyone who has passed many years in this sublunary world of ours, that the greater part, if not every one, of the important events of his life have been brought about by accident, or by circumstances the least likely to lead to such results. However well regulated and uniform a man's life may be, how little able is he to calculate, when he gets up in the morning, what the day will bring forth—what changes and chances the next four-and-twenty hours may have in store for him! An advertisement in the "Times," it may be, startles him at breakfast, bidding him, if he would "hear of something to his advantage," apply at once to Messrs. Weezle and Stote, of Lincoln's Inn, which "something" has the effect ultimately of completely upsetting all his preconceived plans, and of turning all his thoughts and energies into a new channel. An old acquaintance of ours always says he owes his wife to an aneroid barometer. The weather was at "set fair," but his new instrument indicated "rain:" he was a bachelor, and a careful man, so on leaving home he took his umbrella: it *did* rain, and he offered his umbrella to a lady in Wimpole Street: she accepted it gratefully, and in process of time accepted the lender as her husband. There is a well known and well authenticated story of a youth who became the inheritor of a colossal fortune merely

by opening his pew-door to a rich, but shabbily dressed, nabob in a London parish church. We never heard, by the bye, of any more cases of the sort, although for a long time after this event half the pew-doors in half the churches stood hospitably and invitingly open to the stranger. Without going further for an illustration, it was accident by which it came to pass that Brixey became a sportsman; a bad cold, caught by overheating himself in his excitement to see the Emperor and Empress of the French during thei visit to London, was the proximate cause of his taking a moor in Scotland.

We do not consider it necessary to say a great deal of Mr. Samuel Brixey's antecedents, still less do we propose giving many particulars touching his relatives. He had been formerly a partner in the well-known mercantile firm of Brixey Brothers, at Liverpool; and some ten years before the period at which he is introduced to the reader, finding himself rich enough for his wants, he had had the good sense to leave the concern while he might not unreasonably hope to have many years' enjoyment of his independence. His early habits and education unfitted him for a country life; and wisely thinking it too late for him to take kindly to country pursuits, he retired to the metropolis, took a small snug house in the neighbourhood of Montague Square, and invited his sister, Miss Martha Brixey, a lady of mature years and careful habits, to preside over his establishment. This was a sensible arrangement, for more reasons than one; it relieved him from all the domestic cares and troubles incident to a housekeeper; and the presence of a lady operated as a wholesome check upon her brother's expansive hospitality; for Brixey was of a good-natured disposition, and, moreover, of a convivial turn of mind. He was fond of bringing home his bachelor friends

to dinner, and although his sister, far from setting her face against this custom, seemed rather to encourage it, doubtless because it gave her worthy brother pleasure, still the consciousness of there being a tea-urn hissing in the drawing-room had very often the effect of preventing the introduction of "that other bottle" of port in the dining-room.

Brixey's habits of life were simple as they were regular: during the whole term of his residence in London he had hardly spent a day from home, except in the gudgeon season, when he would go down occasionally with a couple of friends to Thames Ditton or Hampton for a day or two's punt fishing. His mornings were usually passed at the Megatherium Club; and it was rare that he was not to be seen during the season in the afternoon on his quiet cob in Rotten Row.

The visit of the Emperor and Empress of the French to this country was productive of more excitement to Brixey than any event which had taken place in London in his time. Wherever they showed themselves he was sure to be among the many bareheaded; and was to be seen waving his hat frantically, and shouting, "Vive l'Emperore!" till he was hoarse. At all the progresses of the Imperial party through the City, Brixey was conspicuous for the noisiness and heartiness of his welcome; and so anxious was he to appropriate to himself a bow of acknowledgment from the pretty Empress, that in his enthusiasm he one day approached too nearly the Imperial carriage as it was passing Charing Cross, when, just as the Empress was turning towards him, and he was on the point of attaining the darling wish of his heart, he found himself rudely collared by a detective in plain clothes, who handed him over to a couple of policemen; and before he had time to

say a word they hustled him away, and in an exceedingly short space of time lodged him in the neighbouring station house. Here he was compelled to wait, in presence of a grim-looking inspector, till the arrival of the detective who had given him in charge.

Poor Brixey's feelings may be imagined, not described, when this latter personage deposed to having seen the prisoner always pressing forward to get near the Imperial carriage, elbowing savagely every one out of his way in order to get into the foremost rank of the crowd. He affirmed, moreover, that the face of the accused was well known to him, although since he had last seen him he had shaved off his beard and moustache. As ill-luck would have it, Brixey had that very morning called in the Strand for a watch and bracelet of his sister's which had been under repair; and on being searched, the having in his possession two watches and some articles of ladies' jewellery was a circumstance, naturally enough, rather against him. The affair, however, ended in his being detained till the jeweller and a clerk from Toots's bank arrived to bear testimony to his character. He was then dismissed; and, having been convicted of doing nothing, was warned not to do it again.

Whether it was the vexation caused by this incident, or a cold caught at the station-house, or both together combined which led to it, but so it was, that Brixey on arriving at home found himself grievously indisposed. He was attacked by a severe influenza, which made him a prisoner in his house for some time, and put him into the hands of his medical adviser and friend, Dr. M'Phun. When after some weeks he had shaken off the complaint, he was so reduced in strength, and his convalescence was so slow, that he began to listen, with something like complacency,

to the Doctor's often-repeated suggestions of change of air.

"Don't send me, my dear Doctor," he said one day, rather submissively—he was coming round—"don't send me to a watering-place. The Isle of Wight would settle me in a fortnight, and I am sure I should leave my bones at Torquay, like most of the invalids who go there."

"Torquay and Ventnor!" replied the Doctor, laughing, "I only send my delicate patients to such places, and ye are no just one of them. It's a bracing air ye require: Malvern, or may be Scarbro'; or, what say ye to the Hielands? And why should ye not take a moor? Ye'll easily find a pleasant friend to join ye."

"Take a moor!" repeated Brixey, slowly: "take a moor! You talk, Doctor, of taking a moor, like taking physic: but where are moors to be got? Where does one apply? Is there an office or agent in town? I am utterly ignorant of everything connected with moors."

"I'll tell ye what I'll do for ye," said the Doctor. "I'll just send ye St. John's book of 'Hieland Sports,' and another volume or two. Aye, there's 'Scrope,' and 'the Rod and the Gun;' and, now I mind me, my brother, Sandy, left 'Snowie's List' behind him. I'll send it ye."

For a long time after the Doctor's departure, Brixey remained musing. The words, "Why should ye not take a moor?" haunted him; and why, he said to himself, should I *not* take a moor? I have heard so much of the delights of grouse-shooting from the young fellows at the club, there must be something very exciting in it. I wonder it never occurred to me before.

In due time, Dr. M'Phun performed his promise, and with half-a-dozen books on sporting subjects, enclosed the well-known annual list of moors to be let, published by

Mr. Snowie of Inverness. With feelings of wonderment Brixey looked over this interesting document—it was a new subject to him—he spelt through all the advertisements, and was absolutely bewildered with the contemplation of the peculiar advantages set forth by every one of them. In one he was tempted by the announcement of there being "good hand-line fishing in the bay;" in another there was the luxury of "a park for a pony;" here, there was actually "a carriage road to the door of the lodge,"—there, peat and fuel were supplied by the proprietor. One of them set forth how that "good trout-fishing was to be enjoyed by rod or net." As to red and roe deer, grouse, ptarmigan, black-game, hares, rabbits, partridges, woodcock, snipe, and wild-fowl, they were as plentiful as blackberries; and then, again, there were "salmon in the rivers, and trout and char in some of the lakes," besides abundance of pike "of which," said one, "twenty-two have been taken at one trawl, some of them running to the size of twenty and thirty pounds weight." (To us this would have afforded strong grounds for concluding there were very few left for succeeding tenants.) In short, they each and all seemed so eligible that Brixey wondered how any should be yet left in the market. There was one advertisement which particularly took his fancy, as it seemed to combine every desirable object. It ran thus:—

"SHOOTINGS AND FISHINGS IN INVERNESS-SHIRE.

"The shootings and fishings of Tommiebeg, extending over the grounds of Knockandoun, and marching with the deer forest of Corriewhiskie and Glenfoulachin, embracing a range over from 12,000 to 15,000 acres, or thereby. The shootings are quite first-rate. Red and roe deer frequently on the ground. Every variety of game—grouse, ptarmigan,

and black-game on the upper range, and the low ground abounds in partridges, hares, rabbits—with woodcock, snipe, and wildfowl in the season. The river affords trout fishing, and salmon after rain. Excellent salmon fishing to be had in the Spey, which bounds the property. Not more than 600 brace of grouse to be killed in the season, and ten deer, that is to say, seven stags and three hinds. The lodge, furnished with all modern conveniences, is situated in an extensive park, and contains one public room, three bedrooms, kitchen, and a sleeping room for gillies. Intending offerers may apply for further particulars to Mr. Evan M'Snail, Morayburgh; or to Alexander Worriecow, Esq., W. S., Edinburgh."

Brixey sat one morning with Snowie's list before him, musing on the promising moor, and as he leaned back in his library chair was vainly trying "to realise," as the Americans say, the idea of a sportsman's life in Scotland. Already his imagination was running wild—he fancied himself now bounding over the springy heather after the seven stags and the three hinds; now returning home, his pockets filled with grouse and black-cock, and his appetite sharpened by the bracing and invigorating air of the mountains —he pictured to himself the excitement of pursuing the roe deer in the grassy glades of Glenfoulachin, and the delight of reposing on the green sward under the friendly shade of some giant oak, or gnarled old beech tree in the forest of Corriewhiskie. His thoughts then reverted to the salmon fishing. What a glorious moment, when his float slowly disappears in the still black pool, and when after a mighty struggle the monarch of the river is transferred to his basket! It struck him that the house accommodation offered was rather narrow, especially as it was

situated in a park; this anomaly, however, he got over by remarking that it was called "the Lodge," in all probability the mansion had been pulled down, and only the park lodge remained for the tenant of the manor; besides, he had heard men at the club talking of the rough quarters they had often been obliged to put up with in the Highlands.

While he was thus allowing his fancy to range at liberty in this new world, he was suddenly brought back to every-day life by the appearance of his young friend Peter Fribbles.

This young gentleman had been a ward of Mr. Brixey's. The paternal Fribbles had been unfortunate in business at Liverpool, and died in the midst of his troubles, leaving a widow and only son but scantily provided for. For some years they had lived on a small income derived from a few acres of poor unproductive land on the opposite shore of the Mersey, which had been settled luckily on the widow. To the kindness of Brixey the young orphan was indebted for a plain mercantile education, the intention of his guardian being to provide for him in his house at Liverpool.

One day, Mrs. Fribbles was greatly surprised at receiving a visit at her humble lodging in the neighbourhood of that city, from two strange gentlemen, who, after some preface, produced a plan of the country on the Cheshire side of the river, and pointing out to her a small line of allotment on the river-bank, across which her name was very neatly printed, asked her whether she was willing to part with the lots so marked on the chart. The good lady, who had long looked to this small property as her only source of revenue, naturally felt indisposed to resign it, although the gentlemen offered a price for it much exceeding its real

value. They continued, however, to urge their proposal, tempting her with still further advances, amounting at length to nearly double the sum first bid for it.

Now the widow was by no means deficient in that valuable commodity called common sense, which immediately suggested to her the probable state of the case.

"If my little property," thought she, "is of such importance as to make it worth these gentlemen's while to have it put in a beautiful map; and if they are, moreover, so anxious to possess it, as to go on thus increasing their bidding for it, there must surely be something or other which I cannot make out—some hidden motive I cannot fathom."

After some such reflections as these, she fairly gave them to understand that she was too inexperienced in business matters to take upon herself to give an answer to their proposal; that she must first consult her friends about it.

"Nay, but my dear madam," said one of her visitors, who appeared prompted by the most affectionate solicitude for her welfare, "only consider for a moment the intrinsic value of the land—a wretched slip along the bank of the river—producing, at the outside, a poor hundred a-year, out of which you have to keep up those miserable tenements. And here we do not scruple to offer you a sum, which, if invested in consols, will yield you a clear hundred and fifty—no losses from non-payment of rent—no outgoings—no complaints from poor tenants. You must see your own interest, surely."

The lady shook her head.

"We might, I think, venture. I hardly know how far our powers will authorise us," added the other, "to throw in another hundred."

"Indeed, gentlemen," replied the widow· "indeed I am

very much obliged to you for such liberal offers, and for taking so deep an interest in my affairs; but, once for all, I must decline doing anything in the matter till I have talked it over with my old friend, Mr. Brixey."

"Brixey!" exclaimed the gentleman who had spoken last. "Oh! if you consult *Mr. Brixey*—mind. I entertain sentiments of the deepest respect for Mr. Brixey; but if *he* is to be your adviser—I mean, if a third party is to be mixed up in the transaction—then, madam, you may consider the business at an end. Be assured no further proposal will be made half so advantageous. Treating, as we imagined, with a lady left, as I may say, without a protector, our best feelings were interested in the case; and do I not speak your sentiments, Grabbit? We went a *little* further than we should have gone *but* for those feelings."

"I entreat you, my dear madam, for your own sake, think better of it," added he who answered to the name of Grabbit. "I have here, in my pocket, a paper—a conveyance—with merely blanks to be filled up. My worthy partner, Hookem, has not overstated the case. What a remarkably fine-grown boy! Your son, I presume, Mrs. Fribbles? Upon my word, I don't think I have often seen a more promising lad." The promising youth—a tall, ungainly, pale-faced boy, about twelve years old, all arms and legs, which protruded violently from the garments in which he was encased—had just entered the room, and, abashed at the presence of the strangers, was standing close to the door—not daring to venture further—with one hand in his trousers-pocket, and a finger of the other in his mouth.

"A most remarkable likeness to his poor father. Don't you see it, Hookem?" continued Mr. Grabbit in a lacry-

nose voice. "Ah, poor Fribbles! we were schoolfellows together. Forgive me, madam——"

"If anything were wanting, my dear lady," resumed Hookem, "if there were wanting anything to enlist our sympathies further, the sight of that handsome boy, so like his poor departed father—the likeness is indeed astonishing—that would be sufficient guarantee of our wish to act in the most liberal manner towards you. Be persuaded, I entreat you——"

"Mother!" the boy blurted out, "I met Mr. Brixey just now, and he said he wanted to see you on particular business. He's coming out by the four o'clock buss."

"That *is* lucky!" said his mother. "Well to be sure,—that *is* lucky. Now, gentlemen, if you will only have the goodness to wait—it wants only a short quarter of an hour, the omnibus always keeps to its time—I dare say my friend, Mr. Brixey, will talk the affair over, and arrange it all to your satisfaction."

This proposition, however, did not seem to coincide particularly well with the views of Messrs. Hookem and Grabbit, who rather abruptly seized their hats, and, without much ceremony of leave-taking, took their departure. They had scarcely left the house when Mr. Brixey arrived: his face—always a benevolently-looking one—was now beaming with pleasure. He seized the good lady by both hands, and shaking them cordially, exclaimed: "I congratulate you, my old friend, on your good fortune! What may be its amount I cannot yet estimate; but a good provision it must be for you and Peter, there. I have just seen a prospectus for building a line of docks and warehouses on the river opposite, and I find you are one of the largest and most important owners of the land."

"Now, if I didn't think so!" replied the happy Mrs. Fribbles. "I said to myself there was a something I couldn't make out——"

"What! you've had a dream, I suppose, or a coal has jumped out of the fire into your lap, or——"

"No! no! no!" cried she, interrupting her friend; "no such thing. Not but that you are much too sceptical about dreams and omens, and all that; but you have no laugh against me this time. I have had a most advantageous offer for the land this very day—not many minutes since."

"You have *not* oeen persuaded, I do hope," said Brixey anxiously. "You have done nothing hastily, I *do* hope and trust."

"Oh, no! my good friend; I was determined to do nothing without you."

"Lucky, very lucky, you did so determine; they are quick in their movements, these fellows. I suspected,—rightly enough, it seems,—they would be on the alert; but I had no notion they would have been so sharp. What did the agent offer?"

"Agents—there were two of them."

"Two?—so they hunt in couples, do they?—one backing up the other, I suppose. Well, what had they the grace to offer you for the land?"

"You would hardly believe—they actually offered me five thousand pounds—oh! and another hundred besides."

"Clever fellows, very; but that was more liberal than I had anticipated."

"Ah, but at first they only offered three thousand, and went on and on."

"The property you possess, my dear friend, on the bank of the river Mersey is worth—and would fetch in the

market, or I am very much mistaken, ten times three thousand pounds."

And so, in fact, it turned out. That wretched slip of ground was sold almost by the inch, and realised a larger sum than even Brixey had foretold. Mrs. Fribbles removed to a comfortable villa at Everton, and Peter was sent to a private tutor's. He there developed no great taste for letters, and having no disposition to go to the university, he was finishing his education by the study of men and manners in the great world of the metropolis.

## CHAPTER III.

In which is a correspondence with a W.S.—Fribbles obtains from his friends much useful information on Shooting and Fishing—A word about Rat-traps.

"PETER," said Mr. Brixey, after the usual salutations, "you are the very man I was anxious to see. What do you think of doing with yourself this summer?"

"Well," replied the youth, "I hardly know. I *was* thinking of going abroad somewhere—to Boulogne, or up the Rhine."

"What do you think of taking a moor?" quietly suggested Brixey, in the very words of Dr. M'Phun, which haunted him continually. "I do not yet know what such a scheme would cost; but as I must go *somewhere* for change of air, I will undertake to bear the lion's share of the expense."

"Well—I hardly know," Fribbles answered, in an undecided tone: indecision of character was one of his weak points. "Take a moor? What in Scotland? But—I—you—we don't either of us know much about moors. Those fellows at the club are always talking about grouse and salmon, and all that. It *must* be capital fun. You are not a good shot, are you?"

"Shot? why—no," replied Brixey, rather uneasily. "No—I cannot say I am. Are you?"

"Well, as to that, you know—I don't shoot bad—that is, at pigeons, at the Red House; and I suppose if a fellow

can hit a pigeon, he can hit a grouse; it is a bigger bird, a good deal."

"Listen to this," said Brixey, authoritatively. "Here is an advertisement of a shooting-place to be let in Inverness-shire. There is a long account of the ground, and so on. You shall see that presently; but just listen to *this*. 'Not more than eight hundred brace of grouse to be killed in the season.' Eight hundred brace! That is no less than sixteen hundred birds—grouse! Why, the country must be alive with them. It will be like shooting fowls in a farmyard. Then there are hares and partridges, and plenty of other game besides. And here, what do you think of this? 'Not more than ten deer to be killed.' Why we shall live upon venison!"

"Well, hang it," replied Fribbles, "I think it is a bore being limited, too."

Brixey then proceeded to read aloud the advertisement in question. Fribbles pulled him up rather suddenly at the word "marching." "What," inquired he, "is the meaning of 'marching with' the forest with the hard name?"

"Marching with it?" replied Brixey. "Oh, going with it, of course. All the same concern: that is clear enough. 'Marching with,' or 'going with,' it is only a different way of expressing the same thing. Most likely it is a Scotch idiom."

"Well, I suppose it is," said Fribbles, satisfied. "I say," he observed, as Brixey read further, "that *is* capital, that salmon fishing to be had in the Spey. The Spey is a river, or a lake, of course—eh? What is that, an extensive park, too? Of course, that is where the deer are. What are gillies? I do wish they would write plain English."

"Gillies—gillies!" Brixey seemed rather at a loss, as he repeated the word. "Oh! I see it says, 'a sleeping-

room for gillies.' Gillies must mean dogs: it is another name, I imagine, for pointers and setters. By-the-bye, if we go, we must get some dogs."

"So I suppose," said Fribbles. "But what are we to do about it? I should like to join in it uncommonly. Hang it! I always feel so small when fellows are all talking about shooting in the Highlands."

"My idea is this," answered Brixey. "We will write at once this Mr. Worriecow, in Edinburgh, W.S."

"What does W.S. mean?" inquired Fribbles.

"W.S. I take it to mean post paid. W.S., 'with stamp.'"

"That *must* be it," Fribbles replied.

Before the two friends separated, they laid their heads together, and concocted the following letter, which Brixey undertook to write:—

"Sir,—My friend Mr. Peter Fribbles and myself have seen in 'Snowie's List' an advertisement of a shooting-manor to be let, called Tommiebeg. It appears to be exactly what we want. As we are referred to you for further particulars, we shall be obliged by your letting us know the rent; and as we are, both of us, quite ignorant of everything connected with such an undertaking, we shall be further indebted to you if you will give us such information and details as may be of use to us in the event of our taking the manor. Waiting an early reply,

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

"Samuel Brixey."

Alex. Worriecow, Esq., Edinburgh, W.S.

They were, in very truth, *quite* ignorant of *everything*

connected with such undertakings, to make such an admission of their inexperience when inquiring about a moor!

Nothing, of course, could be done till the arrival of the answer; but Fribbles promised, in the meantime, to get some hints from a friend of his who rented a moor in Ross-shire, as to what would be requisite for their stock in trade in the way of shooting-gear and fishing-tackle, as well as all the information possible about grouse shooting in general, and of the proper way to take the field. Brixey determined to enter at once upon a new course of reading. He devoured "Scrope upon Deer-Stalking;" he read, and re-read with new delight, the charming descriptions in "St. John's Highland Sports;" and he studied carefully "The Rod and the Gun;" so that by the time the agent's letter came to hand, he had begun to think himself not ill qualified, in theory at least, for his new career.

The reply from Mr. Worriecow was curt and to the point: it was to the effect that the shootings and fishings were to be had for the season, "or for such term as migh' be agreed on," at a rent of two hundred and fifty pounds a year, payable in advance. "In respect of information and details," the letter said, "you can go to Aberdeen by steamer or by railway from London, and from Aberdeen a coach runs daily to Morayburgh, from which the ground is distant fifteen miles; and I refer you to Mr. Evan M'Snail, the factor to the property, who will go with you to show the ground. The rent may be paid into Spankie's bank," &c., &c.

The two friends agreed at once to take the moor for one season, and were soon actively engaged in making ready for the campaign. Fribbles lost no time in making generally known to all his acquaintance the fact of his new acquisition, and his estimate of himself—always pretty

high—was wonderfully raised in consequence. The circle of his acquaintance was large: he was a very popular character, and his society was a good deal courted by young men of his own standing. "He was such fun, Fribbles was." It was no sooner known, then, to the various segments of this extensive circle that he had embarked in this novel speculation, than they all evinced a deep interest in its successful issue.

"So you've heard at last about the place, I hear, Fribbles?" said the Honourable John Tufton—Jack Tufton, he was commonly called—who was enjoying his after-breakfast cigar at the Megatherium, with two or three other friends of Fribbles's, when the latter joined the party. "You've got an answer from Mr. Whatdye-callum?"

"Well, yes," replied he. "Brixey got his letter yesterday."

"How much?"

"Two hundred and fifty."

"You're done," said Jack Tufton, "see if you ain't. I never knew one of those factors tack on an odd fifty, if he didn't mean to do you. Now, if it had been even money—two or three hundred—I'd have had more faith in it—ain't I right, Dolly?"

"I'm sorry for you, Fribbles, indeed I am, very," replied Mr. Adolphus Larker, the gentleman appealed to. "It's a regular do!"

"By-the-bye," inquired Fribbles, "what is the meaning of factor?"

"Factor," answered Larker, readily. "You have heard of the verb *facio*, 'to do?' Well, there it is, you see; factor, one who does you."

"I thought that must be it," said Fribbles.

"How many brace did you say you were limited to?" inquired Tufton.

"Well," answered Fribbles, "eight hundred, it says; but I suppose one may kill a few more; they can't mean to limit one to a bird or two."

"What!" exclaimed Larker, "only eight hundred brace! You have not really taken the place with such a ridiculous limitation, have you?"

"Yes; I wish we hadn't—that is, I wish I'd seen you fellows before we wrote. Then, you know, there's lots of deer: we are allowed to shoot ten in the season."

"My dear fellow!" continued Larker, "you can't be serious. Ten! Ten deer! Why, if there are any deer at all on the ground, you ought to be able to bag at least five brace before breakfast. How many was it you got that morning at Strathfiddick, Fluffey, before you killed the thirteen salmon—you know—and we were not out of bed when you got home?"

"Oh, *that* day!" answered the last-named gentleman, slowly puffing out the smoke from his lips, "*that* day—I forget exactly how many—I think it was seventeen—*bagged* I mean—besides four or five more the dogs got afterwards. I couldn't stop for them, I was so deuced hungry."

"That must be noble sport!" observed Fribbles.

"Yes, it ain't bad," said Tufton. "Done anything about your kilt yet?"

"Kilt!" cried Fribbles, very much surprised at the question. "No, not yet; I didn't think of wearing a kilt—fellows don't all wear kilts down there, do they?"

"My dear Fribbles!" put in Fluffey. "It is really quite refreshing this hot weather to find anything so deuced green as you are; but positively, you know, you must get up the thing a little—you want cramming sadly, I see.

Now, I don't know anything that would afford me more pleasure than the giving you some really useful information. We are, all of us, pretty well qualified, and all, I am sure, equally ready to give you a lift." Both the other gentlemen expressed simultaneously their willingness to be instrumental in improving the mind of their friend.

"I am sure," said Fribbles, "I am uncommonly obliged to you fellows: you know all about these things, and there *are* two or three questions I meant to ask you. By-the-bye, whom do you recommend as the best kilt maker?" he inquired, taking out his pocket-book to enter the address.

"I should say," answered Larker, "you could not do better than go to Picoll's, the registered 'Reach-me-down' man, in Regent Street. Some people get them made down in Scotland, but I think there's a want of style about them. They make them so very loose at Inverness and those places, there's no fit about them. Put down 'Picoll's': we shall be happy to go and see that it is correctly got up, if you will only let us know when it is ready."

"Got your guns and rifles properly looked to?" asked Fluffey. "Can't do any good, you know, if they ain't all right."

"Well," said Fribbles, "I've got *a gun*—a double-barrelled percussion—that will do I suppose. Does one want a rifle?"

"Of course," was the reply. "Let us see—you'll want one Minié rifle for shots over seven or eight hundred yards, *that*, and one or two of Lancaster's or Purday's two-grooves, will be enough for your work. You must have another gun or two, in case of one bursting. By-the-bye, take lots of lint, in case of accidents, and you may as well put up a tourniquet with the other things—there won't be a doctor

within fifty miles of you. You have not got an ammunition chest yet, I suppose, but any gunmaker will put you up to that."

"Have you been about your fishing things yet, Fribbles?" inquired Larker. "There is nothing a fellow is so apt to be taken in with, if he is not up to the thing, as fishing-tackle, and if the maker finds you are a new hand, he will put you off with all sorts of trumpery. To begin with rods—I mean salmon rods—a man should always have a rod in exact proportion to his height. *I* always use a five-and-twenty-foot rod myself; but then I am only five feet eight. Now, though you are six foot two or three, I would scarcely venture to recommend your *beginning* with one more than thirty feet—just for your first season, you know. When your hand gets in you will be able to handle a more powerful tool. I do not see the use of more than two hundred yards of line—do you, Fluffey?"

"It all depends," replied that gentleman. "*I* prefer three hundred myself——"

"Stay," said Fribbles; "I'd better put down a thirty-foot rod, and say two hundred and fifty yards of line—how about hooks?"

"Flies, you mean," continued Larker. "There is a great difference of opinion about flies; nothing like a big one. What is the use of hooking a fifty-pound fish in a strong stream with a small hook? He chews it up, of course. Get all the biggest you can. 'Bleek' is your man; 'Golden Chub,' in the Strand. Make him build you a rod. He will put you up to what you want, such as a clip to land your fish with, a mallet——"

"A mallet! what *can* a mallet be for?" inquired Fribbles, as he noted the article in his book.

"To kill your fish with, of course!"

"Oh, I see!" said Fribbles. "Well, I never should have thought of that."

"Then you will require," his kind informant went on, "a salmon-basket, big enough for a fish, say of only forty pounds; and mind you don't forget a clearing-ring, whatever you do."

"I've *got* one?" cried the youth, somewhat relieved in his mind by hearing at last of some article he had heard of before. "You mean what is used in ground-fishing, in clearing the hook from weeds?"

"Exactly."

"There are the wading things," suggested Tufton; "we must not forget them. But M'Intosh's people, at Charing Cross, will know all that you require. You won't want more than two or three pairs of wading boots and half-a-dozen pairs of waterproof stockings or so. Oh! by the way, mind you get one of those dresses that come up under the arms. You will have to go often into four or five feet water, and in a strong current. You had better be well protected against damp."

"Put down a life-belt," said Larker.

"Yes, it won't do to forget that," observed Tufton. "Never, my dear fellow, wade in deep water without a life-belt. What a narrow escape that was you had in the Findhorn, Fluffey, when you were carried out to sea, and were picked up by a herring-boat in the Moray Frith!"

"That *was* rather a bore," said that gentleman, with great gravity. "That was the strongest fish I ever had hold of; he pulled me off my legs, and I must have lost him, but for the life-belt. It was lucky, to be sure, falling in with that fishing-boat, for the brute was towing me away straight for the Sutherland coast."

"You got him, though, didn't you?" asked Tufton.

"Oh, yes, we got him safe enough; they had a clip on board; I had left mine on the river bank, and had to go back for it."

"That must have been a very large salmon," remarked Fribbles.

"Very like a whale!" said Larker slily; "but how much did he weigh really?"

"Upon my honour," replied Fluffey, "I never thought of asking the weight. I couldn't carry it easily, so I gave it to the fellows that picked me up. Some one told me they had it weighed at Nairn; and the thing, I fancy, got into 'Bell's Life,' or the 'Sporting Magazine;' I forget which. It must have been, I should say, from eighty to ninety pounds, and a clear run fish."

"It must be rather dangerous, salmon-fishing," said Fribbles, rather troubled in his mind by this anecdote.

"What sort of accommodation have you got at the lodge?" inquired Tufton.

"Why, it seems rather small, I think, considering," replied Fribbles. "There's a sitting-room, and three bed-rooms, and kitchen, and all modern conveniences, and——"

"A good kennel, I suppose?" continued the querist.

"Well, as to that, I don't exactly know. They mention a sleeping-room for gillies; so I should think it was all right. They do not usually find dogs, do they, at the moors?"

"No, not often; there are generally, however, lots of colleys on the ground, who hunt it pretty regularly. Those are the only dogs I ever heard of being found on a moor. They accommodate you pretty well in that respect; but you must take down lots of pointers or setters."

Fribbles had not the remotest idea what a colley dog

was, and did not like to expose his ignorance by inquiring. He was rather taken aback at the notion of having to provide an unknown quantity of shooting dogs, nor did he see of what use they could be, if there was such a liberal provision made of other dogs to hunt the ground. He asked, nevertheless, where he could buy some pointers.

"Oh! that's easy enough. Joe Higgs is the fellow to go to; I'll give you his address," said Tufton; and when Fribbles had carefully noted it in his memorandum-book, he continued: "By-the-bye, you had better get your rat-traps of him at the same time; you won't want more than a dozen, or a dozen and a-half at most."

"Rat-traps!" exclaimed Fribbles. "Well, I must say I never should have thought of rat-traps being necessary; what are they for?"

"I do not say, mind you," replied Tufton, "they are positively essential; and, of course, there is no actual necessity for taking them down with you. Only, I consider it a duty to warn you that they are not to be got on the moorside; and if you don't take them, I won't answer for your sleeping much at nights, or having much for breakfast in the morning. Only I should be sorry to damp your anticipations of pleasure; indeed, I do not think it would be right to do so."

"Oh! decidedly not," chimed in the other two young gentlemen.

The cigars being by this time disposed of, the party broke up, not however before Fribbles had ascertained from his friends that the Stuart tartan, or one of equally bright colouring, was the one best adapted to a kilt for shooting, particularly for deer-stalking, as being more conspicuous at a distance, in case of the wearer missing the track, or losing himself on a bog.

Full of the varied and useful information he had thus picked up, but not a little perturbed in his mind by the difficulties and dangers incident to the life of a sportsman in the Highlands, Fribbles directed his steps to Brixey's, and a visit to Mr. Joseph Higgs's emporium of dogs was forthwith determined on.

We have, the reader will remember, accompanied our friends on their way in a cab to this canine establishment in our first chapter; and it shall be our business in the next to describe what they there saw, and what was there done on that occasion.

## CHAPTER IV.

Which treats for the most part of dog-dealing, and shows how Brixey and Fribbles became proprietors of a brace of pointers.

When the cab which conveyed the two travellers had reached its place of destination, Deadmen's Rents, Stoke Newington, their attention was arrested by a large sign-board, on one end of which was artistically delineated a figure, intended to represent a rather stout gentleman, in bright yellow leather leggings, engaged in the operation of letting off a gun; on the other was to be seen a highly coloured animal, apparently a cross between a mastiff and a bull-terrier, "passant, gardant," as the Heralds' College would blazon it, in dangerous propinquity to a bird on the wing, which, having a long tail, was in every probability meant by the artist for a pheasant. In the interval between these works of art was painted in large letters

> "Joseph Higgs.—Dealer in Dogs of every description.
> Badgers kept.—Terriers entered.—Rats to order."

"I'm thinking, gents," said the driver, who now appeared with him of the pewter pot, "I'm thinking you'd best get down here—the road ain't a good 'un for veels—leastvays, if you vishes to ride, ve *can* go—can't us, Bill?"

The rough, rutty track, to which he pointed, left no room for hesitation on the part of Brixey and his companion—they instantly alighted, and attended by Bill, who

knew the country, were soon picking their way across the brickfield in the direction of a tumble-down-looking old building, whose thatched roof and dirty whitewash remained to tell the tale of its having been originally intended for a cottage in the country. Attached to this suburban residence was a low range of wooden buildings, erected, as it would seem, without regard to symmetry or architectural design; the rough planking of which it was composed was, however, painted a bright green colour, and shone merrily in the sun.

We ought to have observed that the moment the cab stopped, the ears of the two friends were greeted with a compound of villanous sounds—yelling, howling, barking, in every key, from the wheezy grunt of the fat lap-dog and the shrill treble of the toy-terrier, to the deep bass of the mastiff and the hoarse baying of the bloodhound, made up a hideous chorus. As they approached the premises, and the quick ear of the animals caught the sound of strange footfalls, the uproar became absolutely appalling.

Their guide observing, perhaps, with the quickness of a London cad, a something like hesitation on the part of the two gentlemen, who, whatever might have been their ideas on the subject, had neither of them expressed their feelings verbally (each perhaps waiting for the other to take the initiative), thought he might do well to venture a word of encouragement, and he accordingly did so in these terms:

"*To* be sure, what a row they dogs do make—but, Lor bless ye it's only their play. They dogs are as tame as lambs, they are. Joe knows how to manage 'em, he does. You should a seen him when the big bull-terrier bitch pinned a gent as went too near her hutch. Lor, how blessed tight she did hold on, *to* be sure—I never see a bitch so orkard to handle. 'Now then, Nan,' ses he, 'you

jest let go,' ses he. Well the bitch never let go her grip, and there she was a holdin' on, and the gent a hollerin' like mad. So what does Joe do? He knowed it warn't no use a reasonin' with the bitch, so he bids the gent bide quiet while he goes and fetches a savage old badger—sech a animal that badger is! Well, as soon as he comes to where they was, he jest lets the badger go at Nan's throat, and she lets go the gent's leg in no time at all, and sech a turn up you never see. There was Nan and the badger a rollin' over and over——"

"But," interrupted Fribbles, with no slight degree of trepidation in his voice and looks; "but was the gentleman much hurt?"

"Hurt! I believe yer," answered the man. "His flesh was tore, and his trousers was rent clean off his leg, they was."

"Really," said Fribbles to Brixey, who had listened with intense interest to this narrative; "really—Brixey—I think—eh? don't you—we had better—better perhaps let Mr. Higgs bring us some dogs to look at—it's scarcely safe——"

They had by this time arrived within twenty yards of the premises, and their guide, seeing now strong symptoms of his party backing out of the expedition, introduced two fingers into his mouth, after the manner of boys, who, in the quiet streets of the metropolis,

"Whistle as they go for want of thought,"

and by this simple process succeeded in producing a sound so shrill and piercing, as to make itself heard far above the din caused by the whole kennel. Fribbles was turning to remonstrate with him, when the stunted figure of a boy appeared at a doorway in the wooden building.

"Master in?" inquired the whistler.

"Well, he was wen I come out," replied the urchin.

"Run and tell him there's two gents here inquirin arter him."

The lad vanished, and if in this interval the imaginations of the two friends had been busied in painting a ferocious portrait of the man whose lot was cast among such savage beasts, they discovered it to be very little like the person who shortly presented himself. Mr. Joseph Higgs was not, in appearance at least, by any means the sort of man they had expected one of his calling to be. He had rather the air and bearing of a decayed butler, and any unprejudiced person, looking at him, would have imagined he had adopted his profession from any other than mercenary motives—from an affection for dumb animals in general, or dogs in particular—perhaps with the benevolent design of supplying the wants of those who loved, as he himself did, the animal dog, "man's best companion." His voice was soft, his manner unctuous and slightly captivating.

"Appy to see you, gentlemen!" was his greeting, as he *looked over* his visitors, and a smile of satisfaction played about his mouth. "Remain outside, William, if you please;" this was to the guide, "we 'll jine you direckly.—Dreadful ot weather this, gentlemen! The poor things, *they* feels it most. Now, what can I ave the pleasure of showing you? Though I say it, I think I have some good 'uns of all sorts."

"We want to buy, if you please," said Brixey; "that is, we want to *look at* a pair of quiet, well-trained pointers—*well*-trained, you understand."

"They are to take down to Scotland," put in Fribbles, in a rather important tone, implying thereby that good dogs

are far more useful in that country than in the south; "they are for the moors."

"*I* knew—I knew at first—I said to myself," replied Mr. Joseph Higgs, "the moment I set eyes on you, gentlemen; 'those are gentlemen,' I ses, 'that knows a good dog wen they sees im, and valeys a good dog wen they gits im.' *I* can see with arf an eye that young gentleman as trod the eather afore now." This he said at a venture, glancing at the outrageous tartan garment mentioned before. Whether he was correct in his judgment or not, Fribbles gave him no opportunity of knowing; he merely held his head a shade higher, which brought it to a level with the top of the wooden palings, now close to them.

"Now then, gentlemen," said the proprietor of the establishment, "do me the honour to enter. Stoop your ed jist a *leetle*, sir, *if* you please. Our doorways are umble ere." Of course this caution was addressed to Fribbles, who, however, had to duck very considerably in order to introduce his body into the opening. If he had stooped only a *leetle*, the chances are he would have carried away some portion of the rotten woodwork.

The place in which they found themselves, presented an extraordinary sight, and one by no means calculated to remove any unpleasant misgivings which might have been suggested by the sounds heard from without. The area, enclosed by a wooden fence of various height, was of considerable extent and irregular in form, portions of it having manifestly been added at different periods, according to the increasing wants of the owner. The inner side of the paling was turned to account by being made to serve as back to a series of open lean-to sheds, some of them put together in the roughest manner and merely tarred over, while, here and there, a little more pains had been bestowed

on the construction, and a coat of bright green paint had been liberally applied, which gave to them an affected jaunty air of superiority.

It would be no easy task to describe or catalogue the tenants of the sheds, and the varied live-stock that was lodged in the leaky old barrels, the rudely patched kennels, the ricketty boxes, the ancient tea-chests, and the numerous other ingenious contrivances scattered about in the interior of the inclosure; and our readers would be fain to stop their ears if we essayed to give only a faint notion of the horrid din caused by the united yell, bark, and howl of the multifarious species of the genus "dog" congregated together. Here a huge bull-dog, with massive head and hideous under jaw, was standing up on end, beating the air with his misshapen forelegs, and tugging at his chain in the insane endeavour to fasten upon something or somebody—there, a monstrous, tawny St. Bernard dog was growling horribly, and fixing the intruders hungrily with his deep-sunk, blood-shot eyes; while terriers of every colour and every breed, Newfoundland dogs—rough and smooth, colleys, poodles—shaven and unshaven, Irish and English spaniels pointers, and setters, were one and all stretching their chains to the utmost tension, with the same *dogged* pertinacity, and joining in the angry chorus. The bettermost sheds appeared to be devoted to fancy animals, such as silky, long-eared, snub-nosed "King Charleses," toy terriers, so diminutive as to be sold by the ounce, and exotics from Russia, Malta, Pomerania, &c. In the less cared-for outhouses were sundry mysterious-looking boxes; from the narrow apperture of one of these might have been observed the grey head of a veteran badger peering out, while from the wired sides of another, protruded the sharp, prying little noses of a family of ferrets.

"Ave the goodness to foller me, gentlemen—keep close behind me, *if* you please, in a line, and no arm can appen to you. Ah! you will, will you, Tommy?" These latter words were addressed by Mr. Higgs, with an accompanying kick, to a most ill-favoured, unprepossessing bulldog, who had made a most vigorous rush to seize hold of Brixey's calf. "Don't be afraid, sir, their chains are measured to a hinch. Not *too* much on that side, sir, *if* you please!" This was to Fribbles, who, walking as carefully as though he trod on eggs, had made rather a circuit to avoid Tommy's advances, and in so doing had nearly come within range of a big mastiff.

"Go to kennel! d'ye hear, Cæsar! I should jest like to see you ketch old of the gentleman!" said Mr. Higgs, angrily, to the dog, who, having failed in his spring, stood showing his teeth and growling with impotent rage.

Fribbles did not take precisely the same view of the subject; at all events he did not express an opinion; but thinking it necessary to say something, although his teeth were chattering in his mouth for fear, he inquired, in the most unconcerned tone he could get up for the occasion, whereabouts the pointers were?

"Jest close by, sir. *There's* a pinter *there*, and *there's* another pinter *there*," replied Mr. Higgs, carelessly waving his hand in the direction of the animals. There might have been twenty brace of them for all Fribbles saw; he did not dare lift his eyes from the heels of Brixey's boots, for fear of deviating from the track. "But," continued the dealer, "those haint the dogs for sech gentlemen sportsmen as you—not *bad* dogs neither, *they* aint—very well for turnips and the fust of September, but they aint fit for the mores. Now, gentlemen, careful, *if* you please, lest at that hangle; that dog's chain haint bin altered, and

it's a arfhinch or thereabouts too long. Steady there, Grip! I'll give it you!" Grip was calculating whether those attractive tartans were not within the length of his tether.

"*There* now! *that's* what *I* call a pinter!" Mr. Higgs exclaimed, stopping suddenly and directing their attention to a gigantic big-boned black and white pointer, who was running madly in and out of an old ridged kennel, rattling his chain, and barking outrageously "*That's* what *I* call a igh-couraged dog; that dog will never tire—*he* won't. Jest look at the pints of that dog, now. Don't be afraid, gentlemen, it's all easy going, now we've got out of that halley." He made this remark because he became aware that his customers were far too frightened to notice any object whatever. Perhaps Mr. Joseph Higgs had seen such an effect produced before—perhaps not.

"Look at that dog, sir," he continued, addressing himself particularly to Brixey: "Look at that pinter, and jest ask your young friend there what he thinks of im; *he* knows as well as *you* do what a dog is."

Now though we have no desire to impeach the veracity of Mr. Higgs in the ordinary relations of life, we feel called upon to aver that he never made a truer assertion than this in his born days.

"Is he not—" mildly inquired Brixey,—"I should say he was—rather a *large* dog?"

Here was an opportunity for Fribbles to rivet the high opinion the dealer evidently entertained of his experience as a sportsman, and of his knowledge of dogs; it was not to be missed, so he observed in an off-hand manner, "Well—as to that, I am not so sure that a *tall* dog is not preferable, for grouse, to a short one."

"That's jest it," said Mr. Higgs, with a quiet smile,

"what you want is a dog for the mores, where the eather is breast igh; and if you avn't a *tall* dog" (he laid some emphasis on the monosyllable "tall") "he can't work. You wouldn't go to ave a dog that's obliged to creep under the eather; if you do, I can suit you soon enough. Gentlemen!" he added with feeling, and he placed his hand upon his waistcoat as he spoke, "it ain't my hinterest nor my hobject to deceive you. You want to be set up with a brace of good pinters. Ponto is *the* one for *your* work; and if you'll ave the goodness to foller me a few yards further, I'll show you the feller of im."

A few paces brought them near an old rotten tub, in front of which was lying at length in the sun another very large-built pointer, who, unlike his brethren, took not the slightest notice of their approach—at least he made no sort of demonstration.

"Hi, Blazer, boy! Hi up!" said Mr. Higgs.

The least perceptible movement of the tail showed that Blazer was wide awake, but declined upon principle accepting his master's polite invitation to get up and be looked at. Blazer was evidently a cynic—so was Diogenes; he, too, lived in a tub, and loved basking unmolested in the sunshine.

"Get *up*, then!" said his master, in a more peremptory tone of voice. To this Blazer thought it might be as well to reply; so he got up leisurely on his legs, gave himself a comfortable stretch, and then quietly retreated into his tub.

"That's a wonderful igh-bred dog, that is," Mr. Higgs went on. "I bought im of Lord Marybone's keeper; his lordship was so fond of that dog, he brought im down from the ighlands, and hintended making a parlour companion of im; but is lordship bein obliged to jine his

regiment, he came to the ammer. You should see that dog back!"

"I observed him just now," said Brixey, confidently; "I observed him when he backed into his kennel."

A slight and almost imperceptible smile played upon Mr. Higgs's features, as he stooped to caress the dog. "Here, Blazer! come along, old feller!" he said in coaxing accents. The dog did not stir.

"He 's so lazy for want of hexercise, there 's no moving im. Here, Jem," he called out to the boy who was busy in a shed hard by, feeding the ferrets, "Jest come here a moment, and tip up this ere dog's utch."

"There now," he continued, as poor Blazer, unceremoniously tilted out of his residence, stood apparently waiting for what was coming next; "There now, *there 's* a pinter again—*there's* a chest, *there's* a stern. But what 's the good of my telling *you* about the pints of a dog? You know as much as I do about the hanimal; may be, more."

"He seems," said Brixey, "very quiet and good tempered. Do you know how old he is?"

"How *old?*" As Mr. Higgs repeated these words, he appeared rather taken aback at the question—after a hasty and apparently satisfactory glance at the face of the speaker, he boldly went on: "That dog 'll be—let me see—May, June, July—that dog 's just two years and three months—a few days more, a few days less, as nigh as may be."

"Oh! you know, Brixey," suggested Fribbles, "when a poor animal has been shut up so long without exercise, it must get stiff and lazy. *I* should say it is quite a young dog. Let us ask," he said in an undertone, "what he wants for them."

"Well, Mr. Higgs," said Brixey, "of course, as we

have no opportunity of trying the dogs, we are in your hands, and must depend upon your honesty for their being tractable and well-trained—now then, for the most important part of the business, the price of the pair?"

"I 'm glad, sir," replied Mr. Higgs slowly and cautiously, "I 'm very glad you 've put it to my honour. To say the onest truth, I ad ardly settled in my mind what to hask for that first-rate brace of pinters. I scarce thought about partin with 'em so soon—if it was only a common lot, you know—and pinters wasn 't so ard to come by, why you know it would be quite a different thing, and I might perhaps ave put the figger as low as fifteen, or perhaps ten suvrins. They 're uncommon ard to find, are pinters, at this otiem ' year. I don't think, sir, hall things considered, five-and-twenty pounds is out of the way."

"Five-and-twenty pounds!" said or rather shouted the younger gentleman contemptuously. "I wonder you did not ask a hundred at once!"

"Indeed," added Brixey, "I must say I do think it is a most exorbitant demand. We really are not prepared to give so large a sum for a couple of dogs."

"For sech a brace of pinters as that is!" exclaimed the man; "but I see ow it is, you gentlemen ave been in the abit of breeding your own dogs, and don't know ow ard it is for us dealers to drop on a good lot; and when we do, it 's ard not to make the most of it. Now, I 'll tell you what I 'll do, gentlemen,—I took a fancy to you from the fust, and I know my dogs will ave a good ome,—I 'll jist take twenty suvrins down, and there 's an end of it."

After giving thus his ultimatum, Mr. Higgs betook himself into a sort of wooden closet close at hand, which bore a very strong resemblance to the watch-box of bygone days. It could not, of course, have been one of those ancient

strongholds, or it would have found its way long since into the British Museum, or Mr. Bernal's collection of antiquities.

This narrow tenement, the half door of which hid all but his head and shoulders, as he sat on a bench at the back, formed Mr. Joseph Higg's counting-house or business office. On a shelf above his head lay a couple of tattered old books, his day book and ledger; a small bottle of ink with the dirty stump of a pen in it was suspended from a nail on one side, and on the other hung a slate covered with curious hieroglyphics. A plank nailed along the top of the door answered the double purpose of a writing desk and a leaning place for his elbows.

It did not appear that he had any particular correspondence or any pressing accounts to make up at this juncture, since, after shutting himself in and sitting down, he leaned back, and, while he watched the two friends out of the corner of his eye, diverted himself by whistling a popular air.

He had little difficulty in gathering from the behaviour of Brixey and his companion, that they were staggered at the enormity of the sum demanded; in fact, the latter talked so loudly and so vehemently, as to make it more than probable some such conclusions reached the quick ear of Mr. Higgs. Brixey's resolution was expressed more by dumb show, by shaking his head continually, by buttoning his pockets with a determined air, and pulling his waistcoat violently down, so as to render the access to them more impossible. Having speedily decided to have nothing to do with the dogs, they proceeded to the edifice, where the dealer sat leaning over his desk.

"Well, gentlemen," said the latter cheerfully, as they neared him. "All 's right, I see. I knew you would decide to take the pinters——"

"Oh!" Fribbles interrupted him angrily, "Oh! I dare say—we are not going to be done in that way, you know. The dogs may be good enough dogs, but we are not going to give anything like the price you ask. I never heard of such extortion.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Higgs with dignity, as he rose from his seat, leisurely opened the door, and stood before them, "I find I ave been mistaken. I *thought* you came to buy a brace of pinters. I show you sech a brace as can't be matched, and you've no fault to find with 'em. I hoffer them at a figger so low as to be halmost giving 'em away, and I am accused of extortion and unfair dealing——"

"But, my good man," interposed Brixey in a deprecating tone.

"Oh no!" replied Mr. Higgs with humble accent, "I am *not* a good man—I wish I was—there ain't many of 'em left—I don't complain of your setting down my time as of no vally, it's what hevery professional individual is exposed to; but what I *do* complain of is your hindecision. I must beg of you to excuse me, gentlemen, as I've business in and jest now. When you have made up your minds, you'll find me down at the ouse."

With these words he fastened the door of the counting-house on the outside, and in a moment was moving rapidly across the yard in the midst of the dogs. Fribbles made two or three strides to follow him, but was brought up suddenly by the blood-thirsty looks of the above-mentioned bull-terrier, Grip, who stood right in the gangway.

"I say, Brixey, you know—this is rather sharp practice. What *are* we to do? How *are* we to get by these infernal brutes?"

Fribbles seemed to have a dim perception of their being

left to be devoured by the wild animals. Not so Brixey, who innocently replied, "Very careless of the man—very—he ought to have remembered how unsafe it is for strangers to pass these furious dogs. Ah!" he added, "there is a lad yonder in the shed. Here, my lad, have the goodness to come and show us the way out!"

The boy, who was still engaged in feeding the ferrets, took no notice—probably the increased din of the dogs drowned Brixey's voice.

"Hoy! hoy!" shouted Fribbles, gesticulating madly with his cane, "come here, you boy, here's a sixpence for you!"

It was extraordinary how hard of hearing that boy was.

"I say, you know, Brixey," continued Fribbles, "this won't do—I'll offer him a shilling." He did so, but the lad never once looked up. A quarter of an hour or so elapsed before he had finished his work; he then came out of the shed, and Fribbles made another wild demonstration. "Hoy! hoy!" he bawled out at the top of his voice. "Here, boy, here's half-a-crown for you!" The boy turned round.

"Here—here's half-a-crown for you, my man!" Brixey called out. "Just come a little nearer this way, will you?"

"Can't yer toss it ere—I'll ketch it safe enough," said the urchin.

"Well, but we want you to lead us out of this place."

"Pitch over the arf-crown then. Right as a trivet!" continued the ingenious youth, dexterously catching and pocketing the half-crown Fribbles as dexterously threw to him. "Thankee, gents—that's all right—that is," saying which he coolly walked away in the opposite direction, and was soon lost to view.

"A young scamp!" bitterly ejaculated Fribbles. "He has done us!"

"Oh dear, no! I hope not," said his older and wiser companion: "I dare say he is only gone to fetch his master —or perhaps he misunderstood us."

They were left thus the best part of an hour in no very happy frame of mind. Some portion of the time they whiled away by making reconnaissances of the ground, in the vain hope of finding some possible way out, or of approaching by parallels the distant exit of the premises, without coming within range of the dogs, who seemed to have become more and more formidable. Fribbles ventured to suggest scaling the palisade, but on examination it was found so defended with nails and tenter-hooks on the top, that the design was abandoned. The young gentleman then fairly gave way to a feeling of rage and despair. He was pacing up and down with wide and rapid strides, and every time he neared his companion he expressed some uncomfortable wish or other for Mr. Higgs. Brixey stood, like one doubting. His was a confiding and unsuspicious nature; besides which, he had been greatly taken by Mr. Higgs's mild and gentle manner. Suddenly their eyes were gladdened by a sight of the boy issuing from the cottage, and coming directly towards them. As soon as he got within hearing distance, he cried out, "Master vishes to know vether you gents has made up yer minds about the price of them pinters. He sed I vos to say he can't nohow take a farden less than a twenty-pun-note for em—and, as he's a-going out on werry pertikler bisniss, he'll be glad to know if so be you'll de-cide now or vait till he comes home at ten o'clock—leastvays, if he aint home by then, he's sure to be back 'by breakfust-time tomorrow. He ses he supposes you'd not vish to stay till then."

"Most atrocious!" Fribbles exclaimed indignantly. "A downright robbery. Hang him and his dogs too! We'll have nothing to do with one or the other of them. And you, sir, just go at once, and tell your master he had better mind——"

"Oh! that's gammon—that is!" replied the urchin. "Ketch me a tellin master sech things. Don't yer vish yer may git it? I vants a answer. Master vishes to know—yes or no—vill yer take them pinters for a twenty-pun-note *now*—or do you mind to vait till he comes back to de-cide. That's my messige, and no mistake!"

"If I thought—if I could think," said Brixey emphatically to his friend. "I say, if I could bring myself to believe that the man Higgs is acting dishonestly by us, and wants to frighten us into buying his dogs, I would rather be torn in pieces by wild horses——"

"Dogs," growled Fribbles.

"Well, then, I had rather be torn in pieces by wild dogs, than submit to such villany. But, my dear Peter, I think we must have misunderstood Mr. Higgs—and—the dogs—they—really seem—particularly the last we looked at—very fine, quiet dogs—and he declares they are perfectly tamed. We can't go down to Tommiebeg, you know, without *some* dogs—and—but perhaps *you* know best. I confess I have no more idea of the price of pointers than I have of the expenses of a war—perhaps they may not be so very dear after all——"

"But, hang it!" said Fribbles, "it looks so—perhaps he does not mean to do us, but it looks confoundedly as though he did—if he does *not* mean it—why then—of course——"

"Now then, gents," exclaimed the boy, "time's up; look sharp, master vos jest a puttin on his gloves ven I

come avay — p'rhaps you'd raythe vait till he comes home?"

"Stay—eh Peter?" said Brixey, "what do you say? I don't think he will take a penny less; besides we must remember he took off five pounds from the first price—suppose we say——"

"Oh well!" replied the other sulkily, "perhaps we had better. Get along, you sir, and tell your master we will take the dogs."

"For a twenty-pun-note, in course?" suggested the boy with a grin which set Fribbles's teeth on edge, but he controlled his indignation.

"Yes, yes, of course," answered Brixey. "And now come this way, my lad, and take us to your master."

"Oh yes! I dessay!" returned the boy; "that 's yer game, is it? I knows my dooty better nor that ere. I shouldn't vonder if my master vos to put off his appintment and come hisself." With these words he coolly walked off in search of that worthy.

Mr. Joseph Higgs, thus summoned, was not slow in making his appearance; he picked his way through the labyrinth of kennels, and advanced with a smiling face to the spot where his customers were waiting. As it did not of course occur to him they had suffered any inconvenience by remaining on his premises, he did not consider it incumbent upon him to make any apology. "I was sure of it," he observed blandly; "I knew well enough you'd never miss sech a opportunity—my wonder is you took so long to de-cide—but some persons is so difficult; there was a party here, last Wensday was a fortnight, wanted a Skye terrier: you 'd ardly believe, it was eleven o'clock at night before he made *his* mind up, and me in bed too. Well, I'm amost sorry to part with those dogs, but it as been my

lot in life to ave my feelins shook continnelly by partin' with the hanimals I love most—owever, a man must do his dooty in that state of life——"

"Now then," Fribbles rather rudely interrupted the harangue, "there's quite enough of that. We have no time to lose; you have kept us here long enough already."

"Not *my* fault, gentlemen, not *my* fault, you was free to go and free to stay; but if you 're urried, I 'll make out a receipt."

"By-the-bye," said Brixey, "I suppose you have no objection to take my cheque upon Toots's; you can furnish me with writing materials?"

"Close at and, sir," said Mr. Higgs, leading the way to his sentry-box office; "and I wish the cheque was to ten times the figger."

The cheque was written as well as the receipt, after which some little discussion ensued as to what was to be done with the dogs, till the time of the Aberdeen steamer's leaving London. This difficulty was however got over by a liberal offer from their guide Bill to board them at three shillings a day, which arrangement having been concluded, Bill remaining behind to conduct the dogs to their new quarters, the friends took leave of Mr. Joseph Higgs, who was profuse in his thanks for their patronage and in good wishes for their sport in the ighlands.

"I'd give," said Fribbles, after they had gone some distance in moody silence in the cab, "I declare I would give five pounds to know whether that fellow put us in a trap on purpose to make us take his infernal dogs. If I thought so—I 'd write to the 'Times'—I 'd expose him in 'Bell's Life'—I'd——"

"Least said soonest mended, my dear Peter," said Brixey impressively, laying his hand on his friend's arm

which was cutting the air savagely. "I hope the pointers will turn out well; it is our first essay in dog-dealing, you know; if they answer our purpose I suppose they are worth all the money."

What Brixey thought in his heart of the transaction we have no opportunity of knowing.

## CHAPTER V.

Showing what befel, when Miss Martha Brixey heard of her brother's taking a Moor—The Doctor called in again.

After a storm comes a lull; in like manner, after any extraordinary excitement, the mind is subject to a re-action. Up to the moment of his concluding the treaty for the moor, Brixey had been in a fevered state, so possessed was he with the delights in store for him, around which his new studies shed so brilliant a halo that he had not given himself time for reflection. He had gone headlong into the thing without looking before him—without giving one thought to the many contingencies likely to happen in the following up his new career. No sooner, however, was the contract settled, and the money paid into Spankie's bank, than his ardour began to cool down, and the undertaking presented itself under a graver aspect. He had not yet broken to his sister the revolution about to take place in his habits of life, and he entertained certain misgivings as to the opinion she might have of his rashness.

The natural penetration of Miss Martha Brixey had been completely at fault during the progress of the negotiation; she had not failed to notice the change in her brother's manner; his fits of musing, his silence, his "distrait" air, had been to her matter for much serious contemplation. His answers to her anxious and repeated inquiries as to the subject which so preoccupied his mind

were, moreover, dark and mysterious in the extreme, utterly at variance with the open, unreserved, confidential sort of terms on which they had hitherto lived; and, after turning the thing over and over again in her head, making every sort of conjecture as to what it might portend, she came to the alarming conclusion that her dear brother Samuel was about to form a matrimonial connection.

This opinion grew stronger and stronger, until it had taken a deep root in her mind, and now the only difficulty she had to get over was the identification of the person who was to be her sister-in-law. She knew that the lady friends of her brother were all of them friends of her own; she taxed her memory to recall any little preferences he might have shown, any expressions he might have made use of when speaking of any one among them. Brixey's exceeding goodnature and kindly disposition made him a favourite with all the younger ladies of his acquaintance; and he was never so happy as when he could arrange some little party of pleasure for them—a trip to Richmond or Greenwich—a visit to the horticultural fête at Chiswick—or a walk in Kensington Gardens to hear the band play. On such occasions he was always to be seen, with the two prettiest girls of the party on his arms, enacting the part of an indulgent papa or an affectionate uncle.

Now, while Miss Martha was thus tormenting herself with vain speculations, Mr. Samuel was uncomfortably ruminating on the best way of breaking to her the great event, which occupied his thoughts sleeping and waking; the longer he put off the disagreeable moment, the disclosure looked more formidable. His affection for his sister revolted at the idea of leaving her alone during the summer, and, at the same time, he was painfully conscious that in the whole course of his meditations on the High-

land expedition, the bare possibility of her sharing in it had not even once occurred to him. There was no getting over it—he must, of necessity, tell her sooner or later. So one day after a tête-á-tête dinner, which had been eaten in silence, when the servant had left the room, he cleared his voice nervously, and entered upon the subject.

"Martha," he said, "you must have observed how for some time I have been a good deal disturbed in my mind ——"

"Samuel," replied the lady, drawing herself up, rather after the manner of ladies who have taken umbrage at the want of confidence on the part of their male relatives, "*now* you speak of it—I *must* say I have remarked your changed manner, and, I cannot help telling you, I feel it much ——"

"Now," continued Brixey, not heeding this hard hit, "I believe I have been very silly in not taking you earlier into my confidence; but, let me assure you, it was not from want of affection for you I did not do so; the fact is, as you will easily understand when you hear what is going to happen, my thoughts were so wholly engrossed in bringing the affair to a close, that it scarcely occurred to me to tease you about it, particularly as the thing might not come off after all—there might be obstacles in the way, you know—I might possibly receive an unfavourable answer, or they might have wanted more money than I was prepared to give—and the contract might take longer to finish than I anticipated. My regret is, not that I have decided thus to make such a change in my ordinary habits of life——"

"Oh no! of course not," interrupted Miss Martha stiffly.

"Well then, my dear Martha, as long, you see—as

there was any chance of my not succeeding, it was no good my troubling you, or consulting you in a matter of which you cannot possibly be supposed to know a great deal ——"

"Oh dear no! By no means—now should I?" said the lady, bridling up. Nothing that her brother had as yet said was calculated to remove the impression she had of his approaching marriage, and this last speech of his wounded her in a tender place. "Of course," she continued angrily, "of course *I* know nothing—of course it could not matter to *me* in the least, your taking so important a step—naturally *I* was the very last person in the world to be consulted; go on ——"

Brixey, having no conception of the conclusion his sister had come to, thought it a little strange she should take it so much to heart. "I am very sorry to find," he said, "that my proceedings seem to give you pain; but the thing is done—the moment I got the agent's letter ——"

"The agent's letter!" said or shrieked Miss Martha; and then, after composing herself, she added gravely and impressively, "Samuel Brixey, you have been advertising! I thought better of you. So you actually wrote to an agent?"

"Why not, my dear? why not?" replied he. "I saw the advertisement in Snowie's list, and thinking it would just suit me, I certainly did write to the agent ——"

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Miss Brixey, roused to the highest pitch of indignation. "Samuel, I blush for you! If you had no regard for *my* feelings in such a matter, I think a sense of what is due to *yourself*, to your own dignity, ought to have prevented your acting thus;" saying this, she burst into tears, and showed alarming symptoms of an approaching fit of hysterics.

"Goodness me," thought Brixey, "what have I done?" and while he suffered his sister to give uncontrolled way to her grief, he tried hard to convince himself there was something barbarous in his conduct with regard to the moor—something which had not struck him. In vain he sought a just cause for his sister's outraged feelings. Seeing her at length a little recovered from her paroxysm, he said mildly, "My dear sister, all this is quite beyond my comprehension. I could not have foreseen you would be so much pained. You know how M'Phun was always at me—always advising——"

"Oh, he was, was he?" exclaimed Miss Martha sharply, and now the current of her tears was stopped—the source was suddenly dried up—anger succeeded to grief, and gave force to her words. "And so—and so—Dr. M'Phun is at the bottom of it all, is he? A nasty—hypocritical—I'll be bound it was he who gave you the list—just like him!"

"Indeed, my dear, you are perfectly right in your surmise," said Brixey. "It *was* M'Phun who sent me the list, leaving it, however, to myself to make my selection, and now I really begin to wish I had not been so precipitate and had waited to ask his advice, he is likely to be more experienced in such matters than I am."

"Experienced indeed! I should think so," remarked Miss Martha coldly. "Dr. M'Phun has had *three* wives, and if he did not know something of such matters, I don't know who should. I have no patience with him—a wretch!"

"Martha!" said Brixey, who began to entertain some doubts in his mind of his sister's being in her right senses, "Martha, will you tell me what connection there can possibly be between Dr. M'Phun's three wives and a moor?"

If Brixey had felt any alarm on the score of his sister's state of mind, she, on hearing him put this extraordinary question, began to be seriously disturbed with misgivings about her brother's sanity. The only instance she could remember of a moor having anything to do with his own or anybody else's wife, was that of Othello, the Moor of Venice. Now to hear her brother gravely put such a question as the one just propounded, added to the outrageous act of his having answered an advertisement for a wife, and committed himself so shockingly as to conclude a matrimonial contract, was too much for her to bear. "Has the excitement which led to his illness unsettled his mind?" thought she: "Has it altogether affected his intellects? Is it come to that?" Overwhelmed with such reflections she sank back in her chair, and giving way to her feelings, burst into a violent fit of weeping, sobbing out at intervals, "My poor, poor brother!"

Brixey loved his sister, and would not have given her pain for the world; grievously shocked then was he to think his unfeeling conduct had produced such terrible effects. He retired to his sanctum to consider what first step he should take, and naturally enough his thoughts turned to his friend M'Phun; so, sitting down, he wrote a hasty note to the Doctor, begging him to come as soon as possible, adding that he wished to speak to him privately on the alarming symptoms of nervous derangement which had developed themselves in his poor sister. The note was instantly despatched. In the meantime, Miss Brixey was no sooner left alone, than the same idea as naturally occurred to her; but not caring to trust to the chance of a messenger, she hastily put on her bonnet and shawl, and started, in a state of great excitement to Dr. M'Phun's house, intending, if she should be fortunate enough to find him at

home, to prepare him for the lamentable state in which she had left her brother. The Doctor had just finished dinner when she was announced; and knowing it must be a very urgent case which would bring her abroad at such an hour, left the table in a state of great uneasiness, and hastened to the room into which she had been introduced.

"My poor, poor brother!" were the words with which she greeted him. "Oh, Doctor," she went on, "Samuel is out of his mind—deranged. I do not reproach you—your own conscience will best tell you how far you are answerable for the fearful state in which he is! It was all *your* doing—it *was!* What business was it of yours, I wonder, to advise him to take such a step? But come—come at once, and see your handywork; come and see the sad wreck you have caused!"

There was a knock at the door of the room: the Doctor, opening it himself, took in a note which was handed to him, and recognising the well-known handwriting of his old friend, did not hesitate a moment in perusing it. The case was now sufficiently clear to him. It was Brixey's note, intreating him to come instantly to see the very person in whose presence he was, and who was represented to be precisely in the state of mind he had already almost decided her to be, judging from the wildness of her manner and the extraordinary speech of reproach she had made to him. Apologising for having read the note, he approached the lady quietly, and took her hand with the intention of feeling her pulse, but she snatched it angrily away from him, and burst out again with the exclamation, "Oh, my poor Samuel—my poor dear brother!—Yes," she went on, "and all *your* doing, Dr. M'Phun, the friend whom he loved, whom he trusted! But come, I say, and see your work! Don't stand there, sir, giggling!" (She observed the good

Doctor smile, as he tried to look unconcerned.) "What is the use of standing there so unmoved? There is no time to lose—come at once. Oh poor, dear Samuel!"

In vain the Doctor tried to soothe her; in vain by every kind word did he essay to calm the agitation of the excited lady before him; the more he tried to tranquillise her, the more angry she became; and at length, resisting all his efforts to detain her, she rushed out of the room, saying: "He must not be left alone! If you don't think the case important enough to make you leave your wine, pray do not come—I am sorry I detained you. When you *do* think fit to come, it may be too late!"

She had a cab at the door, and was stepping into it, when the Doctor, having snatched up his hat in the hall, quickly took his place by her side; and it may be inferred, from what had just passed, that their drive to Somerset Street was not of the most agreeable character.

Brixey was unaware all this time of his sister's having left the house. Fancying she had retired to her own room, he had betaken himself to his arm-chair, and was anxiously awaiting the arrival of his friend, when the cab drove up. "There," said Miss Martha to the Doctor, as soon as they got into the house—"there is his room! You know where to find your victim. Go and finish your work!"—with which words she retreated upstairs.

With a serious and sympathising look the Doctor took the hand of his old friend. "My dear M'Phun," said the latter, sadly, "I merely hinted to you in my note the reason of my asking you to come to me at this unseasonable hour. You will be greatly shocked—so sudden a seizure——"

"But what has happened, my dear friend," inquired the Doctor, "to produce such an effect? Her nervous system must have met with some terrible shock. So mild and

gentle as she usually is, I could not have believed it possible her nature was really so excitable, and that she should at once have become so outrageous. I never remember in the course of my practice such a singular case—to be seized with a mania of the kind——"

"Why," exclaimed Brixey, astonished at the Doctor's knowledge of his sister's case,—"why, my good friend, what do you mean? How can you know anything of her excited state—of her monomania? If I recollect rightly, I merely hinted in my note at something of the kind."

"You are not aware, then," asked the Doctor, "of her having been to me?"

"Been to you? Good gracious! is she then so sensible of her infirmity as to betake herself to you for advice? I always imagined people so afflicted were the last to acknowledge any aberration of intellect on their part."

"I do not say," said M'Phun, "that she came to me on her *own* account. No; the idea under which she acts is that you are the patient, and most terribly has she been abusing me for being the cause of your malady. But tell me—when did the alarming symptoms first discover themselves? Have you observed them grow stronger from small beginnings? What phase did her malady take when you sent to me just now?"

"Really and truly, my dear M'Phun, I am completely mystified. I give you my word I have seen nothing in her manner till within the last hour or so, which could have led me to infer she was other than she has always shown herself to be—a quiet, kind, affectionate soul."

"Good—but tell me," said the Doctor, "how, and under what circumstances you became so alarmed as to write to me."

"Oh! it is almost too absurd to tell you," replied

Brixey. "You will remember having suggested to me, some time since, the taking a moor in Scotland. I should have had much to ask you about *that*, by-the-bye; however, acting on your advice, I wrote, rather hastily I am afraid to a gentleman in Edinburgh, respecting one of the places in Snowie's list, which tempted me very much, and on receiving a reply, I closed with it at once. My intention was to take Peter Fribbles down with me, as soon as we had completed the necessary arrangements. Well, M'Phun, I do not know why, but I put off, from day to day, telling my sister I was in treaty for the moor, and somehow or other, although I engaged it some days since, I never mentioned a word about it to her till to-day after dinner."

"But," said the Doctor, "you do not mean to tell me your sister was so shocked at the announcement of your intentions as to fall suddenly into this unhappy state? Had ye—pardon me, I must know—had ye any unpleasant discussion? Was there any disagreement betwixt ye?"

"No! none whatever," answered Brixey; "but no sooner had I begun to tell her of my new arrangements, than she seemed all at once to lose her senses; fell to abusing you for recommending my hiring a shooting, and—really it is too absurd—she suddenly brought up the fact of your having had three wives, and in some strange way coupled that circumstance with the fact of my renting a moor."

"It is indeed most remarkable," said M'Phun, seriously. "We must take some measures at once. Can I see the poor sufferer? May I ring for a servant?" The lady's maid was summoned, and despatched to find out whether her mistress would see Dr. M'Phun. After a short absence she returned to say that Miss Brixey was anxiously expecting the Doctor in the drawing-room. Leaving Brixey in a state of great uneasiness, and promising to see him before he left

the house, to report upon the patient, the Doctor mounted the stairs to the drawing-room, not a little puzzled at the turn things were taking in this usually quiet establishment.

Miss Brixey, when he entered the room, was in appearance quite tranquil, and the Doctor hoped it might be a lucid interval; but the wild manner with which she rushed to him and seized his hand, dispelled the illusion. "What of poor, dear Samuel?" she inquired anxiously. "Tell me at once—how is he? Tell me the worst—I can bear it. Is it only temporary, or is his mind altogether shaken? How awfully sudden, to be sure!"

"My dear lady," replied M'Phun, gently leading her to a chair facing the light, and placing himself so as to command a full view of her face, "I have seen your brother, and after conversing with him for some time, I am most happy to be able to tell you that I have not detected any symptom to justify your fears."

"Has he told you of his approaching marriage?" asked Miss Martha, in a gloomy tone. "Has he told you of the unworthy manner in which he has engaged himself?—of his answering an advertisement you were wicked enough to give him?"

"About an advertisement I was wicked enough to give him!" said the astonished Doctor.

"Do not repeat my words, Dr. M'Phun—it is scarcely civil. There is no use in being mysterious; I beg of you to give a plain answer to a plain question. Did you, or did you not, furnish him with a nasty list—faugh! I am ashamed to name it—a list of women advertising for husbands? Answer me that! And did he, or did he not, tell you how he had corresponded with an agent, and engaged himself to some wretched creature?"

A faint glimmering of light dawned upon the Doctor's

hitherto mystified faculties. "My dear Miss Brixey," he said, "I certainly recommended a change to your brother. The remaining thus in London appeared to retard his recovery to health and spirits, and I certainly did furnish him with a list—a list of moors; and I suggested—not more—merely suggested his taking one, if he could find one eligible. I never said a word about a wife. You are, my dear lady, under a grievous misapprehension. What I advised was his taking a moor for a change—for wholesome exercise—for a summer's sporting. For goodness' sake, Miss Brixey," cried the Doctor, impatiently, when he found the lady still incredulous, "do listen to reason. Have ye never heard of a muir in the Hielands for shooting over—for fishing—for enjoying a fine, fresh, bracing air? That is the sort of moor I have recommended, and such as your brother has somewhat precipitately taken."

"A moor in the Highlands for shooting and fishing!" said Miss Martha, a good deal sobered down—"But about his marriage? I am confident he told me he was going to be married. I cannot be mistaken about that."

"But are ye quite certain he *did* say he was going to be married? He would, I think, scarcely have concealed from me an event which he must know would be of most particular interest to me."

"Oh, I am quite certain about the marriage. Besides, if he hesitated to let his own sister into his confidence, he would have concealed it from his friend as well. But Doctor, do you not really think there is a something odd about him? A wild kind of a look about the eyes? I am sure, poor dear fellow, he is very far from being well."

"My dear Miss Brixey," replied the Doctor, "I see nothing at all strange in your brother,—what does appear to me strange is this misunderstanding, in which I am inter-

ested, not as a professional adviser, but as an old and tried friend of you both, and in the course of which I have come in rather unfairly, as you will presently admit, for a tolerable share of your ill-favour. So now, by way of making amends, the least you can do for me is to give me a cup of tea. I'll go and fetch Brixey; and on our way upstairs together, I'll make out about this clandestine marriage, and shall certainly forbid the banns."

"Brixey, my old friend," said M'Phun, on entering the room, where the former was sitting overwhelmed with contrition; for he laid entirely to his own door his sister's alienation of mind,—a fact of which he was firmly convinced. "I congratulate ye, old boy, on your approaching marriage. I think ye ought to have let me into the secret: however, it is not too late to wish ye joy."

"M'Phun! M'Phun!" Brixey replied gloomily to this address, "Are *you* mad too? Has my poor sister infected *you?* What on earth do you mean by my approaching marriage? I would not have suspected you of joking at such a time as this."

"Well, but, my dear old friend, are you not really going to be married? Just answer me that."

"Married? No!" replied Brixey rather testily.

"And ye never told Miss Martha ye had written to an agent—a matrimonial broker?"—asked the Doctor, laughing heartily, "and that I put ye up to it by sending to ye a list of fair candidates to choose from?"

"Eh! what!" exclaimed Brixey, brightening up a little, "I told her I had entered into a contract—meaning the moor, of course—and, to my surprise, she exhibited the greatest repugnance to my so doing."

"All a mistake, I knew it was,"—said M'Phun; "and here have you two been tormenting yourselves, by each

thinking the other clean daft. Come up stairs, man! Your sister has promised to give me a cup of tea to wash away all the hard words she gave me to swallow. But ye'll do well, both of ye, to bribe me to secrecy about your making two fools of yourselves in the way ye have done."

The two friends then adjourned to the drawing-room, where all was duly explained to Miss Martha's satisfaction. Not but that, she declared most positively, Samuel had distinctly said something about a wife—she might have been mistaken as to what he did say exactly, but she knew she must be right as to the fact!

The Doctor, who had been a sportsman in his day, took great interest in the moor, and gave Brixey many valuable hints about Highland shootings, dispelling many of the doubts he entertained, and smoothing down most of the difficulties and dangers which Fribbles's account had not failed to present to his friend's troubled imagination.

## CHAPTER VI.

Treating of sundry useful purchases made for the Highlands.

Miss Martha Brixey's ideas of the Highlands of Scotland were vague in the extreme, and gathered principally from a course of reading she had gone through in her youth, and when Scott was still *the* novelist of the day. She had long since given up as unprofitable all kinds of light reading, and had gone into the *heavy* line. That we may not be blamed for designating thus the style of books which composed the greater part of her library, we deem it right to explain that the term is used only in contradistinction to the one commonly applied to works of a less grave tendency, such as novels, fugitive pieces of poetry, &c., to what is called "light literature," in short. She had of late years taken a serious turn of mind, and fed it plenteously with Tracts and controversial books of High Church, Low Church, and no church. Her bookshelves groaned under the weight of sober clad volumes on such subjects, from Baxter to Bellew. She took but little interest in mundane affairs; and as her notions of geography had been for the most part imbibed at a seminary for young ladies where she finished her education, and in which establishment the "Use of the Globes" brought up the rear in the crowded train of its nominal teachings, they were obscure enough.

Of course she was aware that Scotland was united to

England, and formed an integral portion of the kingdom called Great Britain, but beyond that fact she had never cared to learn much respecting it, and was consequently ignorant whether it was an isthmus, a gulf, a cape, or a separate island. She had read, over and over again, in her younger days, the many admirable descriptions of that country contained in Sir Walter Scott's novels and poems, and she took it for granted things remained much in the state there represented, the natives being just as little civilised as they were at the periods he usually chose to make his characters flourish in. Such being her ideas of Scotland, it may be readily imagined she was in great tribulation when it became known to her that her brother was about to penetrate into the Highland fastnesses of which that country, she feared, was mainly composed. How any one could think of going to such a savage, out of the way place, for pleasure, was perfectly incomprehensible to her. For her part, she would as soon have thought of emigrating to the Sandwich Islands or Patagonia—wherever these might happen to be; and then the folly of venturing there with nobody with him but Peter Fribbles, a raw youth, a mere lad! It was a fearful risk for him to run! However, as the expedition was actually decided upon, she began, like a sensible woman, to cast about immediately for a means of discovering what he would want to take with him into that wild district, what articles were not likely to be furnished in that country, and consequently essential to be provided in London.

If there was one thing Miss Martha had a horror of, it was what she called "damp." Every thing she had read about the Highlands spoke loudly of mist and fog, and it was grievous to her to reflect that her brother, when only recovering from a violent attack of influenza, was about to

expose himself to a climate so raw and moist, her main object therefore ought to be the providing such things as might protect him against its bad effects. The first article which suggested itself to her as indispensable to his comfort, was a warming pan—he was sure never to think of *that*—it would not take up much room, she thought, because she might make the people unship the handle, which her brother could carry in his hand on the journey down, while the pan might be turned to good account, by being stuffed with sundry useful little additions to his wardrobe; as, for instance, half-a-dozen new pairs of woollen stockings, a couple of thick flannel nightcaps, a worsted comforter—none of which, she was sure, could be got for love or money in the remote country to which he was bound. It would be very nice, too, to have a pair of India rubber goloshes to wear when he went shooting in wet grass—she *hoped* he would not be so imprudent—but men are *so* thoughtless, they never think of such things, and then they get laid up. If he *should* catch cold, he would want his gruel—he had always been accustomed to it—so she determined on putting up a packet of Emden groats, to which she added a pound of pearl barley for barley-water, and a big canister of arrowroot. As to his diet! Bless the man! she didn't know what *would* become of him—not she—however, she could not undertake *that*—if he will go to such places, a wilful man must have his own way. It struck her, as it was not likely they made butter in Scotland, that half-a-dozen pots of Dundee marmalade, the best substitute, as the label says, for that useful commodity, would be a valuable acquisition. And then, how, she should like to know, was he to get his dinner cooked? He cannot roast his sheep and his deer upon the embers like those savages did in Rob Roy. This was a source of great uneasiness to

her, till she thought of purchasing a gridiron for him. They had never heard of such a thing in the north—she dared to say. These, and a number of equally serviceable articles, unknown, of course, in Scotland, were added to her stock.

With such cares as these the lady busied herself, and she was, to the full, as much taken up with the preparations for the start as her brother could be. Brixey was much more disposed to be guided by the advice given him by his friend the Doctor, than by the information conveyed to him by Fribbles. At the recommendation of the former, he paid a visit to the shop of Mr. Gorse, Holborn, where he invested some capital in a new gun. He was not a little astonished, when engaged in choosing his weapon, at all the small, but important, essentials, set forth by that celebrated maker, as appertaining to a gun; for Brixey, in his simplicity and blissful ignorance on the subject, imagined all guns to be alike, with the exception only, that some were made with one barrel and others with two. He listened with wonder to a long harangue on the properties of the stock, how one was too long, another too short, how this was too straight, and that one too curved—and when Mr. Gorse, as his manner is, put a double gun into his hand, and walking himself to the farthest corner of the shop, bid him take aim at his (Mr. Gorse's) eye, in order to ascertain the proper angle of the stock, Brixey did not half like going through the ceremony, and could only be induced to comply with the request, on receiving a solemn assurance that, not being loaded, it could not possibly go off in his hand. Brixey's manner of handling a gun was not such as to impress Mr. Gorse with any very exalted notions of his practical experience in gunnery, and the latter was a good deal startled, when, after a long dis-

course of his on the different qualifications of a good gun, wherein he laid it down as a rule, that no guns could carry close and hit hard, unless the breeches were made on a particular fashion, Brixey assured him that, for his part, he had not the remotest intention of shooting in breeches, he should stick to trowsers; and said, he was at a loss to know what his friend Fribbles would do, who purposed wearing neither one nor the other, but meant to adopt a kilt—he added, that he should certainly make a point of telling that gentleman what Mr. Gorse had said on the subject. The mechanism of the powder flask and shot pouch he found at first to be rather intricate for ready comprehension, but there was nothing, he thought, which might not be got over by practice.

The Doctor found a leisure hour to go with his friend to one of those dark, narrow, out-of-the-way alleys, where the makers of fishing tackle "most do congregate," and chose for him a good serviceable rod for salmon, as well as a smaller one for trout, with all the paraphernalia of lines, winches, fly-books, furnished with good useful flies, gaff, landing net, and the hundred and one smaller items which go to make up the necessary appurtenances of the fisher. On their way, too, Brixey was fitted with a pair of McIntosh's wading boots, and before they parted his good friend put him up to all the little craft he was master of, in regard to shooting garments—recommending him to have them made of honest shepherd's plaid, and of loose and easy fit. In this way Brixey was very creditably got up for his campaign in the north, and as far as his kit was concerned, would have passed muster very fairly.

It was not so with Fribbles, who preferred following the directions given him by those capital fellows Tufton, Larker, and Fluffey, his club associates, who *did* certainly

give themselves a deal of trouble for their friend. "*They* knew," said he, to himself confidently, "something about sporting—what can an old muff like M'Phun know about shooting and fishing and all that sort of thing?" It was under the auspices of these knowing young gentlemen, he ordered, at a cheap tackle shop, a thirty foot salmon rod, and they found for him, after much research, a monster winch capable of caarying about three times the necessary length of line—none but a salmon fisher could appreciate the wonderful choice of flies made for their friend by these practical sportsmen, and it would have made the most scientific entomologist tear his hair in despair, had he been set to classify them under the names Mr. Fluffey gave them—there was the "Go in and win"—"the varmint"—"the blue ruin"—"the omnibus"—"the never say die"—all of them flies, he assured Fribbles, known only to few of the craft, and safe to kill fish in all waters and in all weathers.

"There is one thing, it won't do to forget," said Larker, as the party left the tackle shop—"however, we can't get it hereabouts—I hardly know where to recommend your getting it, Fribbles. By-the-bye, Fluffey, where was it you bought that capital anchor of yours?—somewhere in the city, was it not?"

"Anchor!" exclaimed Fribbles, "I had no idea we were likely to fish from a boat—they will have anchors, safe enough—."

"It is *not* for a boat—you will have no fishing from a boat," replied Larker.

"What is it for, then?" inquired the tyro angler.

"Oh!" said his friend, "did I not mention the other day—I thought I did—about an anchor? However, it does not signify whether I did or no—only it is lucky we

thought of it now—before you start—how many fathom of line did you carry out, Fluffey?"

"I didn't myself take out more than fifteen fathom," answered that gentleman, "because it is rather a bore winding oneself up in so many coils—some fellows, I fancy, take out twenty, or five and twenty."

"But, I say," said Fribbles; "*do* tell me what it is for? you never mentioned it before—what does one want with an anchor?"

"To be used in wading, of course," replied the other; "you would not be insane enough to go into a deep and rapid river, the Spey, for instance—it *is* the Spey you are going to fish, is it not?—without bringing yourself to an anchor. The rope, you know, is coiled round your body, and you merely unwind yourself, as you go on casting down stream—the main thing to be careful about is, to find good holding ground above you, because, if the anchor drags, of course it is all up with you, and there is nothing left for you but to swim for it. By-the-bye, it would not be a bad precaution for you, in case of accidents, to go to a swimming bath before you leave town, and practise a little with your wading boots on."

"Catch me going into the river at all then," cried Fribbles, disgusted at this new danger, "if I am to run such risks."

"Why, then, my dear fellow," said Fluffey, "you have only been wasting your money in buying tackle, and our time in looking it out for you—if you fish, you *must* wade, and if you wade, without casting anchor, you will have a fair chance of being carried at any moment out to sea, as I was, and then you may not be lucky enough to fall in with a herring boat—I will give you the direction of the anchor-man, if I can lay my hand upon it—at all events, you can

buy one anywhere in Thames Street or thereabouts—*that* you can do yourself."

"I am so glad you happened to be in town," said Fribbles. "I am sure I am very much obliged to you fellows for putting me up to all these dodges. By-the-bye, I say, Larker, don't forget that peacock's feather for my Glengarry bonnet—it is quite as good as an eagle's, and it strikes me will have a better effect. I won't ask you to do anything for me about guns and rifles, in fact I have nearly decided about them myself already."

Fribbles now took leave of his friends, and proceeded alone to see after those most important items in his sporting gear. There were two reasons which led him to decline the proffered assistance of his three friends on this occasion; the first was the feeling that he knew little or nothing about guns and rifles, and was loth to expose his ignorance to those gentlemen for fear of being quizzed and laughed at, of which he had the utmost horror—it was different, he argued, with respect to salmon fishing—a man might, he thought, confess his want of knowledge in that art, without losing caste, and he was also aware, that, without some one to guide him in the selection of flies in particular, and tackle in general, he might lay out a good deal of money uselessly. The other reason was this, Fribbles was of an economical turn, and as he had found out Messrs. Tufton and Co. to be rather extravagant in their notions, he was afraid of their exhibiting in the gunsmith's shop the same *carte blanche* sort of proceeding, they had adopted in the purchasing fishing tackle on his account.

He had an old double gun, which had belonged to his father; it went off very well, he knew, for he had taken it once to the Red House at Battersea, and had let it off at some pigeons. He resolved to make it do, with the addi-

tion of a rifle, and wisely foreseeing the propriety of laying in a stock of ammunition, sufficient to last him some time, he bought two pound-canisters of powder with half a bag of No. 2 shot, as well as a box of caps and a couple of boxes of wadding. He then sallied forth to enquire at Lancaster's the price of a rifle, but was so terrified at the sum demanded and stalked out of the shop with such a rueful countenance, that that eminent judge of bores, unaccustomed as he was to such demonstrations, set him down as a lunatic, who had given his keeper the slip While wandering through the streets turning over in his mind how he should get over this dilemma, his eye was caught by a rifle in a pawnbroker's window in Holborn, ticketed only six pounds, which he at once decided on buying—he declined taking the bullet mould belonging to it, as the man demanded half-a-crown extra for it, and he remembered luckily seeing the same kind of instrument in his own guncase, which he thought would be found to do just as well—it was no use having two of them. He purchased at a saddler's in the same neighbourhood a most capacious game bag : he got it cheap, for it had swung for many years in the wind at the shop door, serving by way of an advertisement that that branch of the business was carried on within.

Feeling now quite relieved in his mind, and satisfied that he was well set up in everything appertaining to shooting, he turned his steps toward the line of street, leading from Blackfriars to London Bridge, in search of an anchor dealer. He was not slow in finding one, and after a careful inspection of the enormous stock in the warehouse, pitched upon one weighing about a hundred weight, which, however, looked quite portable by the side of the giants ranged near it ; and gravely asked the warehouseman whether it was not

the kind of thing he was in the habit of supplying to gentlemen for bringing themselves to an anchor when fishing for salmon. On explaining to the astonished dealer the use he purposed making of it, he was honestly told that a lighter one would answer just as well, and it ended in his becoming proprietor of a grapnel, weighing only a quarter hundred, unconscious, that by so doing, he had passed, twice in the same day, for a gentleman suffering under alienation of mind. The man having directed him to a rope dealer's near at hand, he procured ten fathom of cord, and depositing his double purchase by his side in a cab, returned to his lodging in Bury Street, St. James's, thoroughly contented with his morning's work.

## CHAPTER VII.

Showing how the pointers appear unexpectedly at Brixey's house—their deplorable conduct—A stormy night.

THE two friends had secured berths in the Aberdeen steamer which was to leave London on the Wednesday evening. On the Monday morning previous, Brixey was putting the finishing touch to his toilet, when a knock was heard at the door of his room, and at his bidding to come in, the page-boy appeared.

"Please, sir," said he, "there's a man and two dogs a-wanting to speak to you."

"A man and two dogs wanting to speak to me! Why, bless me, what can that mean? The stupid fellow has mistaken the day; besides he was to have met me at the wharf. You are sure I am the person he wants?"

"He says, sir," replied the boy, "he don't know the gentleman's name; but the dogs is his. Please, sir, I'd best go down stairs at once, for he's come with his dogs into the hall, and there's nobody but me and Mary in the house, as cook has just stept out, and there's no knowing what he may be up to if I ain't there—ain't he a big ill-looking chap neither?" The youth, who evidently had "a soul above buttons," volunteering thus to protect the family, was about thirteen years old and small of his age.

"Stay," said Brixey, hastily slipping on his dressing-

gown, "I will go down with you; this is very disagreeable—very." To his great surprise he found at the bottom of the stairs not the individual, known to him by the name of Bill, to whose guardianship he had committed the pointers, but a ruffianly-looking fellow of gigantic frame, seemingly a cross between a coalheaver and a navvie, with a dash of the costermonger; he was holding by a cord a brace of pointers, which Brixey, if he had had an eye for dogs, would have recognised as his own property, coupled together, and pulling with all their might to effect a landing on the staircase.

"Now, my man," enquired Brixey, "how is this? I suppose those dogs are mine—but what brings them here to-day, and what is become of the man who had to keep them for me?"

"Wot brings 'em here?" said the man sulkily; "why *I* brings 'em here; and if I'd only knowed wot a game they'd have play'd, I'm blessed if I'd have undertook the job; and wot's become of the man as had to keep 'em? why he's in trouble—he is."

"Eh! what? in trouble? What do you mean by being in trouble? Where is he?

"Wot do I mean by bein' in trouble? why wot I means by bein' in trouble is, that Bill's been wanted—he has; and as to where he is, why, may be he's in Queer Street—may be not. That's neither here nor there. Here's the dogs, and here's his small account which I'll trouble you to settle;" with these words he produced from the lining of his hat a dirty piece of paper.

This conversation had been carried on while Brixey was standing on the staircase: he was afraid to go down, as the dogs were keeping guard at the bottom of it. "Just have the goodness, my man," he said, "to hold back the

dogs a little, will you? and I will come down." The man pulled the animals back with a violent jerk which nearly choked them, and Brixey, descending the stairs, took the crumpled document into his hands, but had no sooner cast his eye over it than he indignantly exclaimed, "What abomination is this? Eh! what do I see? Four pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence! Our agreement was only three shillings a-day for the keep of the two dogs, and here you bring me in a bill of four—nearly five pounds!"

"I knows nothink about agreements," the man rudely replied. "*That's* the account—that is; and I'll be much obliged by your forking out the tin. Why you aint looked over it yet!"

The account which the astonished Mr. Brixey was soon engaged in decyphering, was not put out of hand in very workmanlike style; the penmanship was cramped and crooked, the spelling peculiar but on phonetic principles; it was as follows:—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| gent unnone dew too Wilm balls 4 bord an login 1 dorg 8 dase . . . . . | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| dito dito . . . . . | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| to meel an Bucher s meet . . . . . | | 7 | 6 |
| Brok 3 Pans an deel Bords nales to puttenup cennle . . . . . | | 10 | 6 |
| too Kolers an Kupels . . . . . | | 15 | 0 |
| Chane . . . . . | | 4 | 6 |
| docter an fisick plastter wen litl arrys Legg was toar . . . . . | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| totel . . . . | £4 | 17 | 6 |

"I will not," he vehemently exclaimed, as soon as he spelt through the first three items; "I certainly will not

submit to such atrocious imposition. I had almost rather you kept the dogs —"

"*I* keep the brutes!" the man angrily interrupted him, "you ketch me a keeping 'em; if the curs was mine, blessed if I would'nt have drownded 'em long ago! That's wot I would! No, no! you takes *your* dogs—I takes *my* money, money as I ad-vanced to Bill afore he got took—money as is owin' to me."

"But, my good man, I put it to you, as a man of the world. Your unfortunate friend William, himself proposed to board and lodge my two dogs for three shillings a day, the two—he named his own price, to which I agreed—surely it is not to be expected I should be at the expense of victuals for them. I shall be happy to pay what is just and right, and to remunerate you for your trouble."

"So I ex-pect," said the man gruffly, "besides payin the werry identickle sum, four pund odd, as is owin, you'd best pay it at once and a done with it, and as these here blessed dogs are pullin my arms out of the sockets amost, I may as well slip em at once;" so saying he stooped down to unbuckle the couples.

"No! no! for goodness sake!" Brixey cried, "Hold them fast! Don't loose them here!" He wished from the bottom of his heart he had never speculated in dogs. "Eh," he suddenly broke out, as he came to the last item in the account, "What is all this? doctor! physic! plaister too? arry's leg! what is the meaning of all this?"

"Oh! *that's* right enough—that is"—was the reply—"this cur here, ponter, did it—this is him," and he gave a kick to the more lively of the dogs, who returned an angry growl. "He amost tore the poor little chap's leg off, he did!"

"Dear me! Dear me!" said Brixey sorrowfully. The

dilemma in which he found himself was a serious one; even supposing he did submit to pay the exorbitant charge, it was by no means clear to him how he was to dispose of the animals for the next two days. In no very enviable frame of mind he paced up and down the breakfast room, while the man, who had coolly seated himself on the lower step of the staircase, was occupied in wiping the perspiration from his face, varying this amusement by giving an occasional kick to the dogs as they got too near him.

"What on earth am I to do?" continued Brixey aloud, though in reality addressing the question to himself. The page, who was watching him, and had, in the meantime, been turning matters over in his head, came to the rescue.

"I'm thinking, sir, it's only a couple of days; it ain't as though it was reglar, the dogs might lay in the yard, and I can get some straw at the mews, and put em up comfortable; there's lots of bones for them, and I'll feed em all right enough."

"Well, that is not by any means a bad idea, Job, and I am of opinion it is the best thing we can do," said Brixey, and then addressing the man, "On consideration," he went on, "I say, on consideration of the sad misfortune which has happened to the boy, his son, I suppose—I feel rather disposed to pay this bill, although, mark me, I do most solemnly protest against the charge for each dog separately. Now, my man, if you will assist us in putting up the dogs in the yard at the back of the house, I will give you five shillings for yourself for your day's work." The man agreed to this, and while Job went out to provide some straw, and Mary was busy in looking out a couple of old boxes from some recondite lumber room, he accepted, without making any difficulties, an invitation from the master of the house to refresh himself with a jug of ale

on the stairs, which had the effect of putting him in a pleasanter state of mind.

After a great deal of talking and much planning, in which the man evinced considerable talent, two rude hutches were knocked up for the dogs; they were well furnished with straw, and pans of water set by them. The cook, who had returned in the interim, made for them, at the man's recommendation, a plentiful mess of food, and Brixey having settled the account in full, sat down with his sister to breakfast, delighted at having thus got over the "fix" in which he had lately been, and morally convinced there could be now no further anxiety or trouble about the dogs.

The measure of his discomfort and annoyance caused by them was however not yet full. Up to the hour of his leaving home in the morning, the abundant feed they had had appeared to have reconciled them to their new quarters, and their unwonted exercise in the early part of the day disposed them to sleep. Towards evening they began to express, by an occasional bark or howl, something like a feeling of ennui, but Job, faithful to the task he had imposed on himself, stopped their mouths with a supply of fresh victuals, and when Brixey retired for the night to his bedroom at the back of the house, he did so under the impression that his troublesome live-stock had composed themselves comfortably till daylight.

The agitation he had gone through, and the unpleasant musings which had, perforce, kept his mind actively engaged during the day, contributed to disturb Brixey's usually tranquil slumbers. For a long time he lay in a half dreamy, half conscious state, his thoughts reverting to Job's suspicion that their morning visitor was no better than he should be—a burglar, who indeed might be now concealed in the house—a mysterious connection established

itself between his sleeping and his waking ideas. At one moment he was confident a corpulent eight-day clock was moving stealthily about the room, groping carefully about with its lean, dart-like hands—he listened for the ticking, but it gave forth no sound, save at intervals a prolonged howl—he was morally certain he heard the howl, because he sat up in bed to convince himself he was awake. Chiding himself for giving way to such silly fancies he lay down again—again the same deep and fearful howl proceeded from the clock, which was now stationary, at the foot of the bed gesticulating wildly with its hands—and now he hears voices—they grow louder and louder—"What is that at the window?" Brixey starts up—he listens—it is no vain delusion—there *are* voices, angry voices—and a window certainly opens—what a dreadful barking somebody's dogs are making too!

After a short interval of painful semi-consciousness, for the shaking off the impressions of a vivid dream is not the work of a moment, the truth flashed upon him—the dogs were his own, and a fearful noise they were making—but the voices? Whence are they? Burglars perhaps! Full of this dreadful thought, Brixey jumped hastily out of bed, lit a candle, threw up the sash, and began endeavouring by soft words to soothe his precious animals. "Oh fie!" he bawled out loudly, "Go to bed—good dogs!—go to sleep!—oh fie—get away to bed—poor fellow!" he said blandly as one of the dogs varied the duet with a dreadful howl. "Go, lie down, like a good dog!"

"Oh, d—n you both! you and your master too!" exclaimed a gruff angry voice from a window two or three doors off. "Go to *bed* indeed! go to sleep indeed! I should like to know who the devil is to go to sleep while those d—d curs are making such an infernal row!"

"Ah! who indeed?" said a shrill female voice from a window on the other side. "Oh! it's shameful! I wonder Mr. Brixey's not ashamed of himself, disturbing his neighbours in this way—if he is'nt he ought to be." Of course the owner of this voice could not have been aware Brixey was listening.

"My dear madam!" said that miserable individual apologetically, thrusting his head further out of the window, and turning in the direction of the last speaker—luckily it was dark.

"Oh, you old brute!" was the sharp reply as the window was banged down.

While such objurgations as these were being hurled at the distressed owner of the dogs, he was standing hopelessly at his window, looking into the darkness, and the dogs, irritated by the strange voices, were yelping and barking more and more furiously. For a considerable time he remained thus, a prey to the most agonising feelings. Such was his excellent disposition and kindness of heart, that he could boast of having gone through life without making an enemy, and now—dreadful thought—the whole mass of his neighbours were up in arms against him, while his conscience told him what ample cause they had for their indignation. He was painfully sensible of the indistinct mutterings which continued to issue, from time to time, from the houses right and left of him. At length he heard window after window shut down, with more or less violence, according to the temper of him or her whose rest had been disturbed, and beginning himself to feel the chill of the night air, he closed his own window too, and crept into bed—not alas! to sleep, but to ponder on his miserable situation. Every bark of the dogs went to his heart, and again and again he wished them dead—nay

even, in his despair, he went so far as to wish himself in the family vault.

Happily those enemies to his peace of mind got tired at last of their amusement; perhaps the having succeeded in making everybody about them uncomfortable, was grateful to their feelings; it happens sometimes with bipeds, who ought to know better—be it how it may, the barking became gradually less uproarious, was left off and resumed again at intervals, and after some time, to poor Brixey's great comfort, ceased altogether. He passed the remainder of the night in a feverish, fitful, unrefreshing sleep, and made his appearance at the breakfast table next morning with face so woe-begone, that his careful sister recommended his immediately taking two spoonfuls of Dr. Gregory's powder, to be followed up by a basin of mutton broth at one o'clock. "Salmon," she said, "never *does* agree with you, Samuel—and I knew how it would be when I saw you partaking of it yesterday at dinner."

A peevish "Pish!" with "Thank you, my dear—you are quite mistaken—I am in perfect health"—was the reply, for Brixey was loth to make his sister unhappy by recounting to her the history of the past night.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Which opens with a preface, and ends in introducing, by mere chance, a new character.

Until we have arrived at that period of our history at which the two friends may be said to have fairly commenced partnership, and entered together upon their new line of life, we are compelled to change the "venue" occasionally from the one to the other, in order that they may both start fair. Some impatient reader may suggest that the course we have taken, in not despatching them by the last week's steamer, is an objectionable one: it behoves us briefly to state our reason for detaining them thus long in London. It is simply this: we would desire this our book to be a useful book—a sort of handbook; one that should combine instruction with amusement.

Now, in like manner as the veteran pedestrian who, with knapsack on his back, and alpenstock in his hand, has penetrated into the remotest Alpine valleys, and climbed every accessible mountain in Switzerland, would yet find in "Murray" (albeit he scorn to take it with him) some information relating to the spots he has visited which he himself had failed to pick up in his wanderings—so do we hope that the wily deer-stalker, the keen grouse-shooter, and the scientific salmon-fisher will, each and all of them, gain a useful wrinkle or two from the varied details we have thought it incumbent on us to give of the preparations

made by the two friends for their northern expedition. It is, however, rather for the benefit of the inexperienced—those who, like Brixey and Fribbles, would rashly venture into the heart of the Highlands without some practised friend at their elbow to guide them through its difficulties and dangers—that we have said so much, and would say more, anent the "materiel" with which to take the field: it is for *them* we have been so particular in enumerating so many objects and their various uses—as guns and rifles, fishing-rods and flies, life-belts and rat-traps, gridirons and grapnels. But enough of preface.

We left the younger of the two gentlemen returning to his lodgings with the satisfactory purchases he had made in the City; but although the grapnel was a weight off his mind, he was still a prey to countless cares and anxieties, not the least pungent of which was the apprehension lest any of the infinite variety of things he had ordered should be forgotten, or not sent home in time for the start. Fribbles, as may may have been observed before, piqued himself a good deal on his style of dress, and he had set his heart on astonishing the natives at Tommiebeg. The three young gentlemen who had made themselves so useful to him from the first, took great interest in promoting this laudable object, and were at some pains to improve, by their united judgment, the taste of their friend. Some time since, Mr. Fluffey had informed him that there was nothing which impressed the aborigines of Scotland more favourably towards a stranger going among them, than the circumstance of his being well "got up." "Of course," he said, "in the remoter parts they have no opportunity of seeing the prevailing fashions, or any novelties in dress; you will see, therefore, at once how advantageous it must be for a fellow, if he takes down something they never saw

before. You would hardly believe the high estimation in which I was held, and the extensive civilities I received from the nobility, gentry, and clergy of West Ross-shire, merely from my wearing a waistcoat of my own invention—nothing in it, you know—it was original, that's all."

This veracious story of Mr. Fluffey's had made a deep impression on Fribbles. He would like to have inquired of his friend in what consisted the originality of the invention, only it would, he considered, look like plagiarism. It was in vain he taxed his powers of invention—in vain he racked his brain to strike out some startling novelty. At length he was obliged to have recourse to his friends.

"I think," said Larker, "you might do something in shooting-jackets; in fact, I don't exactly see there is anything else left for you. You see Fluffey has established a reputation on a waistcoat, and there is no opening in trousers, because you wear a kilt. Why not come out with three skirts, and no end of pockets?"

"And have it called," added Fluffey, "the 'Fribbles Triplex Shooting-Vest'; that would sound quite as well as the new things I see advertised, such as the 'Emperor's Redingotte,' or the 'Allied Sleeve Tunic'—it would put your name up at once."

"I'll certainly talk to Picolls about it this very day," said Fribbles. "He has finished my dress kilt for visiting and wearing on Sundays at church, as you recommended, and I think it looks uncommonly well. I say, it's rather a bore, isn't it, old Brixey being so difficult to manage? He *will* not see the necessity of dressing well in the Highlands; and it is deuced provoking, there is an old Scotch doctor, a friend of his, called M'Phun, who does nothing but laugh at all I say."

"Never *you* mind," replied Larker; "you'll see what a

pull you will have over old Brixey. You have no idea the sensation you will make, and the way you will be received at all the houses in the neighbourhood."

Many were the interviews and long the consultations held, in consequence of this conversation, with the artist to whom Fribbles intrusted the responsible duty of adorning his person; and the tailor was only too happy to experimentalise, and to call into play what he termed "all his best manufacturing talent, both British and Foreign," at the cost of his customer. In process of time, by the happy adoption of three skirts, and a cunningly-devised distribution of un-get-at-able pockets, a most complex and uncomfortable shooting-coat was produced, which was exhibited in Mr. Picolls's window for three several days, as the "New Registered Fribbles Shooting-Vest," and excited particular admiration in all beholders. *This*, Fribbles flattered himself, would produce an immense effect in the Highlands; nor was he, as the event proved, otherwise than correct in coming to such conclusion.

As the day of departure drew nigh, the mass of packages and parcels which came pouring in caused considerable amazement to Fribbles's landlady, and made her so uneasy in her mind that she could not refrain from unburdening it to her next door neighbour, who, having a house too large for her, let off part—that is almost the whole of it—in lodgings. It is a curious statistical fact, by-the-bye, that there are very few "professed" lodging-house keepers in London; the greater part of those who *take in* strangers are only induced to do so from the reason assigned above. Some few there are who do so from a feeling of their loneliness. These last, we have remarked, are always widows.

"You never in all your life see such a parlour as his is," said Mrs. Gadden; "portmantles, and guns, and boxes,

and clothes, all in a jumble—a ringin and a ringin all day, his parcels is, and Susan a runnin up and down stairs all the blessed day. I only hope they're all paid for; but that's not my bisniss nor yours. It was only last night there, I hear him tramp-tramp-tramp, till well nigh two o'clock in the morning; and looking through the keyhole, thinking somethink wrong, there I see him practi-sing with his gun afore the lookin-glass over the chimley. It was a mussy it didn't go off in his hand, I am sure; and dressed up such a figure too, like the Highlander at the snuff-shop in Fleet-street; if it isn't there now it used to be in my time; and buckles in his shoes, with red ribbons down his legs, wearin no breeches, if you'll believe me—only a short petticoat, with a feather in his cap, and hardly room to move for the trumpery littered about. He ain't fit to go alone—that young man ain't. Something wrong *here!*" and Mrs. Gadden put her finger mysteriously to her false front.

"A screw loose, I suppose!" said the other lady.

"Nothing but it," replied Fribbles's landlady; "and then to see how they poke fun at him! Those young chaps didn't think I heard what they said that night in the pas-sidge, and fillin the house with smoke, they was, all the while, how precious green my young gentleman was, and how jollily he sucked it all in—and that was the very day he comes home in a cab, bringing, what do you think? A hanker and rope, and said it wasn't luggidge when the cabman asked him three-and-six; and there s a long narrer deal box, six foot long if it's a ninch, come for him this arternoon; and he tells us it's a salmon-fishing rod, jist as if my husband don't know a fishing rod when he sees it; besides his asking him, Monday was a fortnight, where we bought our rat-traps, and how much they cost apiece,

and if discount was allowed for ready money, and takin a dozen of them."

"He *says* he is going away to Scotland, don't he?" asked the other lady, who appeared to take a lively interest in Mrs. Gadden's narrative.

"So he *says*," answered the latter, in a tone which implied some doubt about the fact, "and goes away tomorrer night, of all the times of the day to start on a journey, with an old gent of the name of Brixey, old enough he is to be his father, who's always about him—and sech a smooth-tongued, civil spoken, hypercritical feller *he* is, you'd never take him for the artfullest, designinist old file that ever was. Didn't my husband see him collered by two pleccemen at Charin Cross for shooting at the Hemperor, and follered him, knowin him by sight, to the station-house, where his pockets was searched, and full they was of watches and bracelets, but having dropt the pistol, no evidence was proved, so he was found not guilty; but it is him that's implicated my young gentleman; he's a bad un, if ever there was one!"

"I wish, for my part, Scotland was swallowed up," said Mrs. Chorks, the other lady, angrily. "As if London wasn't good enough for them indeed! There's my drawing-rooms went last week to Scotland, and my two-pair back has took himself off to Ireland. It's all one—and now, would you believe it, there's my front attic has got it into *his* wise head to go to Scotland!"

"What! the Captain!" said Mrs. Gadden; "why, he was backward with his last fortnight, wasn't he?"

"Oh!" replied the other lady, "he's flush enough of money now; he's paid up handsome. By-the-bye, he's been asking me all sorts of questions about your parlours—him you was tellin about—*where* he was going? and *when*

he was going? and who with? But I was close: he didn't get much out of me."

"His *name's* Downey, ain't it?" said Mrs. Gadden, with a significant laugh; "he won't be down upon me—not he!"

"Lor! I hope he didn't hear us," whispered Mrs. Chorks in an alarmed tone of voice, as steps were heard passing the back room where the ladies were conversing, the door of which was ajar. "Hush! he's coming back again!" A soft respectful tap, if respect can be put into a tap, at the door, was followed by the appearance of a gentlemanly looking, middle-aged man, dressed a few years younger than the grey tinge of his redundant whiskers seemed to justify.

"I really beg your pardon, my dear Mrs. Chorks, I did not know you had company," said the gentleman, half opening the door, and making a show of retiring precipitately. His double barrel had told; the endearing adjective applied to his landlady, as well as the polite substantive indicating her friend.

"La, Captain!" cried the former, "come in; it's nobody but the lady from next door."

"I was afraid," said the Captain, making a most polite bow to the stranger lady, "I was intruding upon you. I merely wanted to inquire of you if a long deal box is come for me; it ought to have been sent some days ago?"

"Not as I know of, Captain," replied Mrs. Chorks, and turning to Mrs. Gadden she said, "I suppose it ain't scarcely possible they might have made a mistake in the house?"

"There's been a many packidges come for us in this last week," said the last-named lady. "I've got a young gentleman, sir, as goes away to Scotland to-morrow, and sech a heap of things——"

"Guns—I dare say—and fishing-rods?" the Captain remarked.

"Well, there was guns and fishing-rods I can speak to," said the lady.

"Your young friend has taken a moor perhaps, madam," the Captain suggested in an oily tone; "and I dare say is going down with some young companions who have joined him in it."

"I've only heard talk of *one*," was the reply, "and he's a gent by the name of Brixey——"

"A nice young fellow, I think I remember him," the Captain put in, "and a capital shot too. I've no doubt it is the same."

"*He* a young feller!" said Mrs. Gadden; "he's upperds of fifty if he's a day, and as to his shooting, my husband says he don't think betwixt the pair of them they knows the barrel of a gun from the muzzle."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Captain, testifying great interest in Mrs. Gadden's parlour lodger, whom he persisted in designating her young friend, "I sincerely hope, madam, I have not been unfortunate enough to give your servants any trouble with my parcels, tradesmen are so careless about numbers; if I have," he went on, "I must trust to your goodness to pardon me. So your young friend goes by the early train to-morrow does he?"

"He's not going by railways: they're going by the Abydeen steamboat safe enough," said the lady.

"That's curious enough," observed the captain; "then we shall be in the same boat. By-the-bye, Mrs. Chorks, I am sorry to say I must leave town to morrow. I had hoped to be with you another week—but letters I got this morning—Well, I wish you good day, ladies; if a deal case *should* come for me, pray let it remain down stairs,

Mrs. Chorks!" and making a polite and comprehensive bow, the Captain left the room. He had learnt all he wanted to know.

"And a very nice, civil spoken gentleman *I* call him!" said Mrs. Gadden, "quite the gentleman, that it's a pleasure to talk to."

It will scarcely be imagined that the interest taken by an utter stranger in the welfare of Fribbles, could have its origin in a feeling of purely disinterested benevolence or love of his neighbour. In order to explain what may seem unnatural, or out of the usual course of things, we must devote the tail of this chapter to a slight biography of that gentleman, and we have the less hesitation in doing so, since the reader will come across him most probably in the next one.

Captain Frederick Downey—he had assumed a brevet rank, as he had never got his company—sold out of a line regiment early in life, nobody knew why, and had lived for years nobody knew how. He had always regularly stalked deer and shot grouse in Scotland, and shared in many a big *battue* in England. His face was familiar at Melton, and he always had a good mount in the Park, and all this without possessing any ostensible means whatever. He was of good family, of pleasing address and manner, of infinite tact, and clever at everything, from pitch-and-toss to fly-tying; but he had no rent-roll, no funded property nor revenue of any kind. In his most palmy days, in the days of his prosperity, Fred Downey was a riddle; everybody met him everywhere, and as he was a good-humoured, gentlemanly fellow, people knew little and cared less what his financial arrangements might be. Was there a part unfilled in any private theatricals, the first person named for it was Fred Downey; he was good in any walk—from

*Sir Peter Teazle* or *Jeremy Diddler*, to *Cardinal Wolsey* or *Hamlet*, it was all the same to him. Then he made himself so useful in getting up the thing; scenery, machinery, dresses, and decorations, he was *au fait* at all. In a country-house, too, he had so many ways of making himself agreeable; he could take a part in a trio, and copy music in-doors, or "teach the young idea how to shoot" at the target on the lawn; he could manufacture a kite for the boys, and show them a new way to fly it; he would enter their terriers at rats, instil into their young minds the first principles of trapping vermin and ferreting rabbits, or put them up to some clever secret in bait-fishing.

Alas! that we should speak in the past tense! Fred Downey had led this sort of life for many years—a riddle to all, but more especially to his own family, who, knowing his resources, or, to speak more correctly, his want of resources, were marvellised at seeing Fred's name every now and then in the "Fashionable Circular" of the *Morning Post*, as forming one of a distinguished circle enjoying the splendid hospitalities of some noble host; or in the *Sporting Intelligence*, as winning a steeple-chase at some celebrated meeting or other. As time wore on, Fred's old intimates dropped away one by one. Some married and settled in the country; some died; some were banished, or, what they considered the same thing, were appointed to foreign consulates; some disappeared mysteriously. On the few that remained, Fred's affection was concentrated; and it is to be feared his warmth of feeling was not always properly appreciated, since on one or two occasions he became so attached to the family, there was no getting him out of the house; in fact, one of his old chums, who had shown great kindness to him, was actually obliged to migrate with his family to the sea-side,

in order to get rid of their visitor, and even then, so devoted was the friendship of the latter, that he offered to remain in the house while they were absent, to look after the macaw and feed the canaries. In the meantime another generation had arisen, that knew not Fred. It had Downeys of its own, too, as talented, as accomplished, as good-natured, as accommodating. He felt this deeply for a while, but suddenly taking heart he resolved for once to do things on his own account; so one London season he appeared in great force, driving a quiet but *distingué*-looking cab, with a tiger behind, small enough for a breast-pin. Some said he had come at last into his fortune; others that he was going to marry one. All were wrong. One fine morning Fred was missing. It was then reported that he had run away with an heiress, or from his creditors, after which nobody thought about him. It was known only to a few that he was living in retirement on the Surrey side of the river, in the neighbourhood of the metropolis. For a long period nothing was heard of him, till one day the name of a Frederick Downey figured under the article "Insolvent Court," as being remanded to the Queen's Bench to amend his schedule.

In due time he emerged from durance, washed clean from his incumbrances, and, ever a riddle, had been living on his ways and means for many months, before we find him lodging next door to, and taking such interest in our friend Fribbles. It so happened that one day he had heard at Lord's Cricket Ground a party of young men quizzing Fribbles about his moor; and after that youth left them, they went on talking and laughing over his greenness and inexperience. Not many days after this, he chanced, by a strange coincidence, to be in Mr. Gorse's shop, whither he had gone for a chat, as Mr. Gorse was an old friend of

his, when Brixey bought his gun, and in him he fancied he recognised Fribbles's partner in the moor. His mind was made up. Visions of grouse and salmon flitted gladly and palpably before him. He found no difficulty in ascertaining where Fribbles lodged; and failing to get a room in the same house he took an attic in the next one, and bided his time.

## CHAPTER IX.

Trials of Temper—The Aberdeen Steamer—A Friend in Need, and an Affecting Legend.

PERHAPS there is no scene in the drama of life in which the character "Self" comes out more openly, more naturally, and more honestly, than in the one represented or enacted during the short half-hour preceding the departure of a sea-going steamer, either on board the vessel itself, or on the crowded pier or quay along which its anxious passengers are hurrying. All the conventionalities of society, all the ceremonious regulations of good breeding, are here, as though by common consent, kicked aside; all disguise is for a time pitched overboard, gilding, tinsel, French polish, and all; and the creature "Self" is displayed in all its naked deformity. We seek not to justify this reckless "abandon," this temporary weakness, this non-lucid interval: we deplore it; but if—we only say, *if* an excuse were to be sought for it, we almost think it might be found and admitted valid on the occasion referred to: nay, we venture to assert boldly, that many of the characters handed down to us as examples of extraordinary forbearance of temper, and patience, and self-abnegation, had they been submitted to the ordeal of shipping themselves and their luggage (to say nothing of their wives and families) on board an Aberdeen steamer, would never have been celebrated by the poet or historian.

The first incident which gives a slight shock to the

equilibrium of the temper happens about thirty yards or so from the entrance to the wharf. By some singular fatality, it comes to pass invariably that the narrow street in which it is located is blocked up by waggons or drays, about an hour previous to the one advertised for the departure of the steamer, remaining in such a state till the vessel is fairly under way; whence it is obvious that the traveller, if he will not run the risk of losing his passage, must alight from his conveyance, whatever it be, at some distance from his goal. It is at this precise moment when he first begins to feel his "dander rise," as they say in America. A ferocious onslaught is instantly made on his personal effects by a legion of ruffians, who have been lying in ambush for him. Never carriage was rifled by Terracina professionals, under the direction of Fra Diavolo himself, with greater rapidity and dexterity than is the cab of an unfortunate traveller by these gentry. In vain he remonstrates: he marks with anxious eye his gun-case till it fades from view; he sees his portmanteau, his bag, his rod-case, follow in its wake; and he is rushing madly in pursuit of an ill-favoured varlet, who has taken forcible possession of his dressing-case and hat-box, when he is confronted by the cabman, whom in his excitement he had forgotten, demanding from him, in the most heartless and unfeeling manner, a sum amounting to within a fraction of three times his proper fare. There is no time for disputing: he pays it, and is off again after his luggage, when lo! he is surrounded by a host of ragamuffins, all requiring to be paid for lending a hand in the spoliation of his property, or for looking on at the outrage. The milk of human kindness curdles in his bosom. He hates mankind from that moment: he sees an enemy in every fellow-creature: he speaks words of terrible import:, and, after running the

gauntlet of the jeering mob, we see him frantically precipitating himself into the steamer, traversing plank bridges, which in his cooler moments he would not have dared to tread, elbowing, jostling, poking with his umbrella or entangling in his plaid every one that comes in his way, without regard to age or sex.

Brixey was in the habit of taking things coolly; his temper was smooth and even; but even *he* had arrived on board, himself hot and his temper ruffled by some such treatment as we have just described. By the assistance of a remarkably civil fellow-passenger, he had succeeded in gathering together all his goods and chattels, and in getting rid of the porters. Under the same guidance, too, he had gone below and taken possession of his berth. He was now standing on the deck of the vessel, looking at his watch, from time to time, and from that to the quay, his countenance giving indications of excessive restlessness and uneasiness. Job, who was to have followed him in a cab with the pointers, was not yet arrived; and what could have become of Fribbles? He had promised to meet him at five o'clock, and it wanted now but a few minutes to six. The steamer showed symptoms of being in a hurry to move off, by hissing and puffing and sprinkling the passengers with dirty rain from the steam-funnel. "They will certainly be too late!" he exclaimed, in the anguish of his mind.

"You expect a friend, perhaps, sir?" said a quiet voice near him: it belonged to the individual who had extricated him from his difficulties. "You need not be uneasy; there is plenty of time; they never start punctually. Can I be of any use to you?"

"Why, really," answered Brixey, "you are very good. I'm almost ashamed, but if you *would* have the kindness

just to go with me as far as the gate of the wharf. My friend is rather—that is, he is a little——"

"Oh! he is, is he? Then we had better lose no time," returned the gentleman. "Here, give me your hand," he went on, as he saw Brixey looking nervously at the plank. "There—that's all right! Now come on!" And they were presently forcing a passage through the ranks which fringed the quay.

They had no sooner reached the entrance than a Babel of sounds met their ears, of which it would be difficult to convey a remote idea. Men, and boys, and dogs, wert giving tongue all at once. One of the latter, it might have been gathered, had bitten one of the former, as reference was occasionally made to that circumstance. "Sarve you right." "*You* come along." "You're another." "Come along, I say." "What bisness had you with 'em?" "Police! Police!!" "I'm not a-going to be bit!" "Hooray! here's a row!" "*You* do it again!" "You're another!" "Bow, wow, wow." "You let go that chain." "Oh! by the piper!" "Who are you?" "Go it, Buttons!" "Bow wow." "Now then, I say, where are you a shoving to, as if you was a steam-enging buffer?" This last question was addressed to Brixey. He had recognised Job and his pointers in the middle of the fray, and was valiantly struggling through the crowd to get near him. "Hold 'ard! old un! where are you squeezing to?" said another.

"Now, then, stand aside! Let go those dogs, sirrah, do you hear!" cried the loud authoritative voice of the stranger, who, pushing every one right and left, was soon in the thick of the *mêlée*. Such was his imposing air and manner, that the crowd instinctively gave way before him. A few mutterings were heard about somebody's hand being

bit, and a sanguinary wish or two was addressed to "swells" in general, but a free passage was given to the page; the dogs were pulling him along so rapidly he had only time to say to his master, as he passed him, "Please sir, there's Mr. Fribbles in trouble just close by."

Brixey, with the chivalrous ardour he always displayed in cases of danger, hurried up the street, followed closely by his polite friend-in-need, in the direction of another crowd composed of the banditti before mentioned, who were busily stripping Fribbles's cab, while that young man was to be seen a head and shoulders above them angrily gesticulating and arguing with the driver, turning occasionally to keep an eye on his things, and to bid the fellows leave them alone.

"Oh, be tinder with the gintleman's box! sit it down aisy, boys! it's his coffin, divil a less, he always sleeps in it!" said a mellow voice, which provoked a hearty laugh from the bystanders. "Oh, aisy there wid the anker, Micky!" continued the same wag, "don't ye see it's to stop the staymer wid, when the long gintleman's saysick." A number of equally facetious jokes were made at the same time in allusion to Fribbles's stature, in the which he was likened to a lamp-post, a jury-mast, the monyment in Monyment Yard, &c., which were received with more or less applause.

The subject or object of all these witticisms continued disputing with the cabman; and as it was highly improbable they would have ended in being unanimous, they might have remained there till now had not the stranger traveller very speedily and summarily adjusted the matter by giving the man about half what he asked, bidding him, in a peremptory tone, betake himself to a certain place, which we do not find in Mogg's "List of Cab Fares," under

the letter H. He then ordered two or three men, whom he selected from the crowd, to convey Fribbles's baggage to the steamer, where it was duly deposited, just as the last bell was ringing and the shore-goers were leaving the vessel. Among the last was Job, who, waving his hat from the quay, shouted out to his master that the dogs "was took to" by a sailor at the other end of the ship. Both Brixey and Fribbles were profuse in their acknowledgments to the gentleman whose services had been so truly advantageous to them, while he expressed the sincere gratification it had afforded him to be of use. They then went below to arrange their berths.

It takes some little time to shake down in a steamer comfortably, and the two friends had much to learn. With the aid of the steward they disposed satisfactorily their respective travelling bags and smaller incumbrances in their cabin, and then proceeded to the deck, where they were joined by their new friend, who was obliging enough to point out to them the principal objects of interest on their passage down the river. It was not till he made mention of the Isle of Dogs, that Brixey remembered he had got to look after his torments, and with this object he went to the fore-part of the vessel; there he soon came upon a group of sailors and fore-cabin passengers, seemingly in a state of high good humour and enjoyment. Their laughter was occasioned by a big dog sitting up on his hind legs, and presenting the most grotesque figure imaginable; on his head was a sou-wester, and round his neck was tied a red-checked cotton handkerchief, in his fore-paws he held a cane. The severe gravity of the dog's countenance afforded a funny contrast to the obstreperous glee of the spectators. Brixey entered into the joke, and stood by for some minutes admiring the tableau. He was hesitating to whom he

should apply to get tidings of his pointers, when he was startled at hearing one of the party, who acted as master of the revels, address the mountebank dog by the name of Blazer; and, on looking more attentively at the animal, he thought he recognised in him one of the objects of his search.

"*That* must be my dog, I think," said he, addressing himself to the man who seemed to be such an old acquaintance of Blazer's.

"Oh! he's *your'n* now, is he, sir?" replied the man, with a grin. "Well, I never thought to see the old chap agin. Blazer and me is old shipmates, ain't us, old feller?" The dog, whose masquerade had been stripped off, answered with an affectionate wag of the tail.

"Eh! you know the dog, do you?" inquired Brixey.

"Lor, love ye!" replied the man, "*know* him? Why this here old dog's made many a woyage along of us—he's as good as one of the crew. Why, he took so naturally to a seafaring life, he cut away from his business up Braemar way once, and come aboard for the best part of a summer."

"I think," said Brixey, "you must have made a mistake; *that* is quite a young dog—I bought him as quite a young dog—not much more than two years old."

"*That* a young dog! What, old Blazer a young dog! well, that *is* a good 'un! he's as old as a man," exclaimed another of the crew: "he's bin up a shooting this ten summers or more. And as to being mistaken, why look'ye here, sir, 'Up man, sit up!' he said to the dog; and up went old Blazer at once on his hind legs. It was conclusive. Under any other circumstances, Brixey would have felt gratified at finding himself proprietor of so talented an animal. The surprise would have been an agreeable

one; but the unpleasant feeling of having been so cruelly taken in swamped every other but that of vexation. Leaving his accomplished dog in the hands of his old friends, he paid a visit to Ponto, who was as usual making himself as objectionable as he could by barking and howling in a spare horse-box. Brixey then mentally ejaculating, as the phrase goes, several heartfelt wishes, whose accomplishment would be seriously detrimental to Mr. Joseph Higgs's welfare, as well as to that of his dogs, rejoined Fribbles and his new friend, who were already on capital terms.

"So then," said the latter, as Brixey came up, "you have never been north before?"

"No, indeed," replied that gentleman, taking up the question, "we are quite novices—rather a bold undertaking, you think? But I suppose it is all plain sailing enough—a little roughing it at first?"

"I do not know much about plain sailing," said the stranger, shaking his head and looking grave. "You have, of course, got letters of introduction to somebody in the neighbourhood—you have, perhaps, some friend on the spot to set things going for you?"

"No," answered Brixey, "we shall be very like the babes in the wood, I am afraid; we neither of us know a soul at or near the place; to be sure there is the factor, as he is called, at Morayburgh; he is to go with us to the manor, it is *his* business to put us in the way of it."

"Hum!" said the stranger, mysteriously. "I hope you may find it so, that's all."

"Why, dash it!" cried Fribbles. "I should think we've got a right to that; by-the-bye, what is he a factor of? Is he a corn-factor, or a cheese-factor, or——"

"Oh! no," replied their new acquaintance, laughing,

"factor, in Scotch, means agent, or steward; and if this one is like the greater part of those I have met with, you are not likely to get much out of him; though, take my word for it, he will screw all he can out of you. I wish," continued he, thoughtfully, "I wish I was not engaged to Lord John's. I wouldn't have minded going down with you for a week, just to start you. You will find plenty to do. I suppose you have not yet engaged a keeper: of course not; well there is *that* to do, and a most important matter it is. Then you have to hire servants, and I'll be bound you have hardly given a thought to household affairs. There's all your linen to get, sheets, table-cloths, towels, napkins, and that sort of thing; there's the plate, again, spoons and forks, and it is a wonder if there is a sound tea-cup, or a plate that is not cracked either. Well, then you've the stores to lay in,—wine, beer, spirits, tea, coffee, sugar, soap, and candles. You see I'm an old hand; then, let me see, you must have a ham or two, and a side of bacon, with half-a-dozen tongues; then there's salt, and pepper, and mustard, and sauces, and pickles, and I don't know what besides,—a list as long as your arm. Perhaps, however, you'll take all these things down with you from town?"

"But, I say," interrupted Fribbles. "You don't mean to say we've got to get all these things; they *must* find linen and plate at the lodge, and for the other articles, I dare say there will be a good shop near us."

"Of course, there *must* be," added Brixey.

"I am afraid," replied the stranger, "it is very far from being a matter of course; there may be what is called a merchant's shop within a dozen miles of you; but you will have to get your supplies from some large town, your bread and meat, for instance; you are lucky

if you find milk and eggs on the spot, and meal for your dogs. The odds are, you will have to furnish the lodge throughout, and will find nothing but bare walls when you get there."

"Good gracious! I say, Brixey," exclaimed Fribbles, looking rather appalled, "we never thought of all this; it's a bore, ain't it?"

The stranger, whom the sagacious reader will probably have guessed to be no other than Captain Downey, now left the two friends, under the pretence of obtaining a light for his cigar; he had given them plenty to think over and talk about. He had played his cards well; the game was in his hands. He was no sooner gone than it turned out precisely as that far-seeing individual had imagined. The first remark was simultaneous, each regretting the engagement the Captain was under to Lord John; it would have been so nice, they agreed, to have had him with them just for the first week, to set them going; and that it would be greatly to their advantage, if he could be prevailed upon to pay them a visit when he left that nobleman. They had then some talk over the best way of proposing this to him, because he was, after all, a mere stranger, and might consider it a liberty. Brixey then going below to get his great coat, Fribbles went through a most intricate manœuvre with his plaid; and having, as he thought, followed exactly the instructions given him on the subject by Messrs. Picolls, by enveloping himself in a tight and uncomfortable fashion in its coils, he stretched out his legs at length before him, and abandoned himself to meditation.

The red glow of sunset lit up with a ruddy tint the sails which were hanging in picturesque folds from the yards of the varied craft dropping down the river with the ebb; the

air was still, and, but for the heavy booming of the indefatigable paddles, all was repose; but it was not the glorious Claude landscape on the west, nor the lovely Stanfield eastwards, which had to do with the young gentleman's reverie; he was turning over in his mind all the prognostics of the Captain, all that the latter had said of the probable trouble and expense they would have to incur; hitherto he had considered the only drawbacks to be contingent on certain difficulties and hardships in the pursuit of sport. This was quite an unexpected blow. Now, whether it was that this train of thought had put him in an ill-humour, or whether he had resolved to maintain the exclusiveness he had always affected in London, but he made an impatient gesture, and somewhat rudely turned his back upon a restless-looking little man who had taken the vacant seat at his side, and had made, as he did so, some observations on the weather. The little man, unwilling to be repulsed, hazarded a second remark on the sunset, to which the youth uncourteously replied by a sort of grunt.

"Ah, well!" said the intruder, in a melancholy tone of voice. "It don't signify! All the same to us this time tomorrow evening. Lord preserve us from danger!"

"Eh! what danger?" cried Fribbles, turning towards him.

"Oh, nothing,—it don't signify; only I dare say you remember what Milton says of an evening like this. By-the-bye, it wasn't Milton—I don't remember who it was; but it don't signify,—I think it was Thomson." He then commenced declaiming, very emphatically:

When from the pallid sky——

Only see how pallid it is now—

——the sun descends,
With many a spot, that o'er his glaring orb
Uncertain wanders—stain'd, red, fiery streaks
Begin to flush around——

Only look at them now. You remember how he goes on —a devil of a storm—Lord save us!—

——The mountain billows to the clouds,
In dreadful tumult swell'd, surge above surge,
Burst into chaos with tremendous roar——

We are in for it—always my fate—a regular Jonah—never went to sea in my life without being shipwrecked—once off the Scilly Isles—four times off the Nore. I'll show you the buoy I rode upon for five hours, presently,—and I've been driven upon every part of the coast from Yarmouth to Bridlington Quay. You never tried Captain Manby's apparatus, did you?"

"Manby! No!" cried Fribbles. "*What* apparatus?"

"Oh! don't you know? For preserving lives from shipwreck,—quite used to it now—rather like it, in fact—so exciting—ha! ha! ha! I was thinking how funny you will look swinging on a rope!"

"*How* swinging on a rope?" demanded Fribbles, affronted at the insinuation that he would not look as well as other people under such circumstances.

"Why, hand over hand, you know,—rig out a basket for females—sad, very; three or four on board now—nice girls —besides old ladies, who are always drowned. Are you a married man?"

"Married? No!"

"Well, that's a consolation at any rate to feel in one's last moments. No bereaved widow—no fatherless babes: for yourself it don't signify."

"Oh! don't it though?" cried Fribbles. "But you

don't really think," he continued anxiously, "the weather will change?"

"Don't think about it—sure of it. You swim?"

"Not much."

"Long, thin, threadpaper chaps like you never do,—go down like a stone. Made your will? Great fun for your heir—no hearses—no plumes—no mourning-coaches—no long-tailed horses to match—no jolly mutes—no undertaker's bill—only just a bit of crape and a black coat, that's all."

"I say, you know," said Fribbles, who felt aggrieved at the coolness of the stranger in talking so lightly, first of his person and then of his decease, "that ain't so pleasant to talk about. I wish you wouldn't."

"Oh! well, I won't, if you don't like. Have a weed?" said the other, offering at the same time to Fribbles a case well stuffed with cigars; and, seeing him hesitate about taking one, he continued, "No ceremony!—more than enough to last *our* time—Oh! I beg your pardon. But it don't signify. Seen the papers to-day?" inquired the stranger abruptly, after they had been smoking some time as silently as Hollanders, "Old Grumpy gone at last."

"Old Grumpy," said Fribbles; "who was he?"

"Not heard of Old Grumpy? Thought everybody had heard of Old Grumpy—European reputation—intimate friend of mine—travelled more miles by rail than anybody on record—never *could* meet with an accident. You'd hardly believe it—went up and down by the Eastern Counties continually for a whole week—never got off the rails nor run into a goods-train, nor was run into by an express, once in all that time. Left it in disgust and went to Great Northern—*that* very afternoon a beautiful smash on the Eastern Counties—passengers all doubled up—some

killed—all damaged. Never *was* such ill-luck—the *very day* he left it! But it don't signify."

"How do you mean ill-luck? What don't signify?" asked Fribbles.

"Why, wasn't it the devil's own luck, after he had been trying so long for a good accident. Never heard his story, perhaps? Curious legend. Disgusted with the world from childhood—melancholy boy at school—always alone—hated society—flogged for drinking Daffy's Elixir, and expelled at last for swallowing marbles. Master told him if he didn't mind what he was about the coroner would sit upon him—verdict, *felo-de-se*. Registered a vow on the spot to dodge the coroner—tried 'Morrison's Pills'—no go—though he got to ninety in a day. Had a turn at 'cold water'—drank a bucket full before breakfast every day for months—wouldn't do. Took to homœopathy—swallowed a medicine-chest full of globules—failed altogether. Thought change of air would settle him—passed winters in Lapland and Siberia, and summers at Sierra Leone and Fernando Po—never enjoyed better health in his life. Took to the railway. 'Seem to know Old Grumpy, sir,' says a porter to me one day at the Birmingham Station. 'Rum customer *he* is!' Asked him what he meant—*who* he meant by Old Grumpy? 'Gentleman,' says he, 'as you shook hands with—uncommon fond of railways, he is—he's been travelling day and night for years, and nobody knows him by no other name—he only come in by the two o'clock train from York, and now he's off to Edinburgh—perhaps he'll be here again to-morrow—perhaps not for weeks—only he's sure to turn up some day.' Won't turn up any more now," continued the stranger, after a pause—"smashed to atoms—Eastern Counties did for him at last—remains swept up and shovelled into a barrow—hardly anything left

for the coroner to *sit upon*—verdict, 'Accidental death'—kept his vow."

"But," asked Fribbles, "how did they know it to be Old Grumpy?"

"No mistaking the small red carpet-bag—there wasn't a porter on any rail in the United Kingdom that wouldn't have sworn to it as the property of Old Grumpy, the railway traveller."

## CHAPTER X

Showing how Peter Fribbles got into the Wrong Box—A False Alarm—The Cromarty Family.

THE berths on board steamers are not constructed on the same principle as the articles we see labelled in the hosiers' shops. If they were so, and were ticketed accordingly, "Large Gents," "Small Ladies," or "Stout Man's," it would be a great accommodation, and still more so if they were numbered like kid gloves, in order that every traveller might fit himself at once. Such an idea occurred to Fribbles, as he contemplated the small shelf on which he was to arrange himself for the night. The thing looked absurd, and not to be achieved without tying himself in a knot, or folding himself up like a parcel. The more he surveyed the berth the more ridiculously small and disproportioned to his length it appeared. It was the first time he had ever felt otherwise than proud of his height; it was provoking to see Brixey sound asleep, and looking as placid as if he had been used to nothing bigger than a cradle to sleep in all his life.

The weather was fine, the sky bright, the air fresh but not cold, the water smooth as glass. Fribbles resolved to pass the night on deck; the only toilet he made was the carefully adjusting round his body his new life-belt, ready to be blown up at a moment's notice. He carried up with him all his stock of upper garments, and began looking about for a soft plank whereon to establish his couch.

After trying two or three spots, he pitched himself at last under the lee of a pile of luggage, and tried to compose himself to sleep. The novelty of his situation and the unyielding nature of his bed were much against him; but worse than all was the conversation of a group of persons who were, some sitting, some standing, close by him, and the light of whose cigars burnt fiercely in the darkness. They were discussing the Sea-Serpent, which one of the party, whom Fribbles by his voice recognised as his last-made acquaintance, had seen, he said, over and over again, indeed, he appeared to be quite familiar with it, since he was giving a most graphic description of the monster, of its enormous length, its countless coils, its green hair, its small head, and big goggle eyes, which gleamed like the bull's-eye of a policeman's lantern, together with a variety of highly interesting and marvellous facts connected with the animal, for all of which he vouched most veraciously. Feeling very little disposed to sleep, and finding his bed, moreover, anything but luxurious, Fribbles got up and joined the party. After some time, they dropped off one by one; and then it occurred to him he might as well go below too, and lie down on one of the sofas. With this intent, he went to pick up his rug and poncho, which he had left spread upon the deck, when he was saluted with an angry growl; he gave another pull at the garments—the growl was more menacing. "Confound the people who bring dogs on board!" thought he; "how's a fellow to get a fellow's things if they're to be taken possession of by dogs?" He tried to entice the animal from his lair, by going to another part of the vessel and whistling. The brute never budged; and after a little Fribbles went down without his things. It was Blazer, of course.

To those who have made many voyages the domestic

arrangements of a steamer are familiar. This was the first time Fribbles had been on board one; and he could hardly be expected to know by intuition how that the cabin on the one hand was devoted to the ladies, and that on the other to the gentlemen; in his ignorance, he turned to the right, and by so doing went wrong; but the lamp burnt dim, and the sofas were unoccupied; so, without a second thought, he threw his plaid over him, lay down on a sofa, and was soon sound asleep.

In the watches of the night Brixey awoke uncomfortably, and, as soon as he had ascertained where he was, he put his head out of his pigeon-hole of a bed, and called in a low voice to his friend, whom he judged to be in the berth beneath him: "Peter, I say, are you asleep?" There was no reply. "I say, Peter,"—he tried a little louder this time,—"are you asleep?" Again no answer, which many persons would perhaps have considered the *best* answer to their question; still was Brixey not satisfied. After many fruitless attempts to get a reply of some sort, he became uneasy, and getting out, he discovered that Fribbles's berth was unoccupied. He instantly summoned the steward, who appeared, as stewards are prone to do when called for in pressing accents, with a light in one hand and a basin in the other.

"Steward," asked Brixey, "where's Mr. Fribbles?"

"Don't know Mr. Fribbles, sir. Oh! you mean the tall young gent? On deck I think he is, sir."

"I should feel very much obliged, then, if you would ask him to step down to me for a minute."

"Can't find the gentleman nowhere," said the steward, who returned after being absent a minute or two.

"God bless me!" exclaimed Brixey; "not find him! You looked everywhere? I am very uneasy—I'll go myself."

"Wait a bit, sir. I'll go forrard and look; perhaps he has mistook the cabin." In about ten minutes he returned, evidently uneasy himself. "I'm very sorry, indeed, sir," said he, "but the gentleman ain't forrerds; here's a coat and a poncher; they ain't his, perhaps?"

"As I am alive," cried Brixey, "they *are* indeed his! See, there's his name! What is to be done? Has he got into the wrong berth?"

"No, that he ain't, sir, to my certain knowledge."

"Then," said Brixey, in a decided tone, "then we must instantly stop the ship."

Brixey was greatly astonished when he found that was not to be done. He dressed himself hastily, however, and, together with the steward, raised a hue and cry on board the vessel. The persons, who had been smoking above, deposed to the missing gentleman having joined them, and the one who descended last declared he had left him still on deck (this was the little man above-mentioned); he said, besides, that he could call to mind many traits in the young man which made it more than probable he had thrown himself overboard—among others, a sort of fixed melancholy. He was rarely wrong, he said, in his estimate of people; and he felt bound to assert that never, in the whole course of his life, had he met with an individual more likely to commit suicide than the young gentleman whose loss they must all deplore; he thought it, moreover, his duty to state, that as he was descending the stairs, he fancied he heard the plash of a heavy body falling into the water, and he had his misgivings. "Devilish lucky," he went on to say, "it didn't happen in the Mediterranean—no pratique—died of plague perhaps—so many head booked—so many head to be accounted for—fellow missing—six weeks' quarantine—happened to me once." Captain

Downey, now Brixey's oldest surviving friend on board, wrung the hand of the latter tenderly, and was quite overcome, for he had conceived the warmest friendship for the poor deceased, he averred.

The passengers, who were soon assembled in the cabin in varied and picturesque costume, agreed one and all how shocking it was; and one old gentleman, in a dingy tartan dressing-gown, wearing a black cotton night-cap on his head, with a red and yellow bandana over it tied under his chin, said he considered his duty to "improve the occasion," which is another way of expressing the desire to deliver a sermon. He observed, that "the premature and totally unexpected and athegither unforeseen death—though, may be, he died by his own hands—that is to say, not praceesely by his own hands, since it was obvious he leapit overboard, supposing always it was no an accident, which was varra like to be the fact of the matter; but whether it was just by his own act, or whether it was just by an accident he came to his eend, it's one and the same thing, the spectacle of the death, that is to say, not the spectacle, because ye did not any of ye see him pass away." (A voice was heard to say, "Oh, it don't signify!") "I mean the contemplaation of the sudden and athegither unexpected tearmination to the existence—how it came to pass it's no for me to say—of our young friend, Mr. Fribbles; ye'll obsearve I ca' him *our* friend, because all men are brothers, though we never saw our brathren before—one may live east and another may live wast, and they may no meet—and so, being brathren, I am justified in tearming him our young friend, Mr. Fribbles. As I was obsearving, the contemplaation of his death——"

A loud shrill scream put a sudden end to this discourse: it was followed up by a chorus of screams from the ladies'

cabin, and then there was pushed into the after-cabin, half awake, and totally unconscious where he was, or how he got there, the lengthy, helpless figure of the very man whose loss they had been mourning over. Poor Fribbles had been discovered by a middle-aged lady, who occupied a berth opposite the sofa on which he reposed. His uncommon length betrayed him. For a considerable time she had stared at him in amazement; her feelings were at first too many for her; but as soon as they were sufficiently reduced in intensity to allow her to act, she screamed out, "A man! A man!" and in less time than we have taken to narrate it, the stewardess, who was a stout, strong-minded female, had hustled the still slumbering youth out of the violated precincts of the ladies' cabin, pursued by the united screams of all its fair occupants.

How inconsistent is man! To a dispassionate person it would seem a moral certainty that the appearance of the young man, whose loss they were deploring so deeply, would have been hailed with one universal shout of satisfaction, and welcomed by every individual assembled in the cabin. Alas! for poor human nature! It was the signal for one common expression of indignation and disgust. Even Brixey's joy at seeing the lost one again was not altogether unmixed with vexation at his having been deceived. The reverend gentleman was the first to creep into his berth, observing, as he pulled the counterpane on him, that the young gentleman, Mr. Fribbles, should be verra thankful and grateful he was not snatched away, and he hoped he would be mindful in future, and no distearb folks from their night's rest with any more such feckless doings. One gentleman used some strong language, expressive of his contempt and disgust at such conduct, while another spoke some bellicose and menacing words to the individual who

had shamelessly and disgracefully intruded himself into the sleeping-chamber of the wife of his bosom. Captain Downey expressed his congratulations aloud to Brixey, on the recovery of his friend, but mentally wished something uncomfortable had really happened to the latter. There was one, a little man, who, as he threw himself on a sofa, was heard to say: "Oh, it don't signify."

Meantime, the hapless youth who had been suspected of entertaining such suicidal tendencies, now thoroughly awake, was staring about, still unconscious of what all the hubbub meant. At first coming to his senses, he had fancied the ship was on fire, or on a rock, under which impression he had hurriedly blown up his life-belt. No one remaining to give him any explanation, and having a vague notion he was in some way an offender, he sneaked into his own cabin, and coiling himself up into the smallest compass he was capable of, he rolled into his berth, life-belt and all.

It was not till Brixey informed him next morning, that Fribbles was made aware of the atrocity of which he had been guilty in the night. How could he face the breakfast-table? What could he say to excuse himself? What construction would be put upon his innocent act?

All the ill-humour of the night before had given way before the enchantment of a smooth sea and a bright day. Fribbles had to go through a good deal of quizzing, as soon as he appeared, from the male portion of the passengers, and it was no difficult matter for him to discern, from certain whisperings, and gigglings, and sly looks at him from the ladies who appeared at breakfast, that they recognised in him the object of their alarm in the night. The gentleman who had expressed himself so aggrieved at the supposed insult to his wife, now seemed to enjoy the joke

amazingly, and presented Fribbles to Mrs. and the two Miss Cromartys, to give him, as he said, an opportunity of making his peace with them.

This move on the part of the Papa Cromarty was not an unpremeditated one, as might have been inferred by any one who heard the "aside" whisper, and witnessed the telegraphic signal which passed between him and his lady, whose acquaintance Fribbles was thus permitted to make. The fact is, Mr. Cromarty was a careful and prudent parent. He had seized the opportunity of Brixey being on deck before breakfast, to enter into the subject of the adventure which had called them out of bed. He enlarged eloquently on the alarm that gentleman must have felt at the idea of losing so dear a friend, and ended in learning from him all he desired to know touching the ways and means of his young friend. This must have been quite satisfactory to him, since it resulted in his taking the step of making the youth known to his family.

Mrs. Cromarty was a tall, stately, showily-dressed lady, who had evidently once been very handsome, and looked as though she were used to command admiration—she was a splendid ruin. The two Miss Cromartys presented a contrast rarely seen between two sisters. Ada, the elder, who was a trifle on the objectionable side of thirty, inherited the fine figure of her mother, but that was all: a fair complexion, however, and long flowing ringlets of light silky hair, added to a certain kitten-like playfulness, made her appear nearly as youthful as her quieter and less showily dressed sister. Minna was only nineteen. She was of ordinary height and elegant figure. With the exception of a pair of pretty blue eyes, and a profusion of rich brown hair, parted on her forehead, there was no particular feature in her face to attract admiration; but, just as a

A STEAM-BOAT SCENE.—p. 121.

passing gleam of sunshine often draws our attention to the landscape on which we have been gazing listlessly, and makes us exclaim, "How beautiful!" so would a gleam of feeling, of joy or sorrow, of archness or seriousness, light up her face with an expression which caused him who looked upon it to marvel at his blindness in not having been sensible of its beauty before.

It is not to be imagined that Fribbles, who was a devoted admirer of the gentle sex, had not noticed this interesting family group before. On the contrary, he had looked at it with admiration and awe; he had looked at it as from a distance; he would no more have dared to approach it than he would have dared to intrude himself into the opera-box of a duchess; and now when he found himself admitted to their society, he could not divest himself of his early impressions. Perhaps, too, the circumstance which led to his introduction went for something in his embarrassment.

The elder sister soon put him at his ease by making room for him at her side; and Fribbles, grateful as he felt for this act, was speedily annoyed at finding himself taken possession of, and actually, as he told Brixey afterwards, made love to by the tall one, while he would have resigned her willingly altogether for only one look at the soft expressive eyes of her sister. "Dash it," said he, "she asked me as many questions as if I was being examined for a doctor's degree. First she wanted to know which music I liked best, German or Italian. Fancy asking a fellow such a thing. Well, you know, I thought all music was alike; but, as it's best to give an opinion, I said 'Italian,' at a venture. 'You like Verdy,' she said, 'I know you do. Now *do* tell me,' she said, 'you *are* an admirer of Verdy.' Well, how was I to know what Verdy was? But as she seemed to like it herself, I thought it would be civil, you

know, to do the same, so I said, 'Well, the real fact is, I *do* like it uncommonly.' 'I'm *so* glad,' she said, 'you admire Verdy. We've just been abroad, and nothing goes down now but Verdy. Isn't the Trovytory lovely?' she said. 'Well,' said I, 'it is—splendid. I like,' said I. 'Trovytory no end better than Verdy.' Now the deuce of it was, you know," Fribbles went on, "whenever I got a glimpse of the pretty one's face, the little gipsey was sure to be laughing outright at her sister asking such things. Well, and then the old lady put in *her* oar. 'There,' says she, 'there, don't tease Mr. Fribbles any more, Ada, dear, about music; I dare say he's not an enthusiast, like you.' 'Perhaps,' said the little one, and she looked so nice, 'perhaps,' said she, 'Mr. Fribbles is fonder of poetry: he is going to Scotland—the land of poetry. He will see the Grampians, and that will recall to him that magnificent speech about the Grampian Hills. I dare say he remembers it.' 'What,' said I, 'that which begins, "My name is Norval?"' 'The very same,' she said. 'Oh, I believe you I do,' said I; 'I learnt it at school; would you like to hear it?' 'Immensely,' she said. So I began speaking it. But would you believe me, I'd no sooner got to the word hovered—"I alone, with bended bow and quiver full of arrows, hovered"—I heard some one say 'Cupid' quite distinctly; and hang me if the young one was not seized with a fit of choking. She rushed down stairs; the old lady stalked after her, sobbing convulsively; and at last the elder one was suddenly taken worse too. And there was I, left all alone. Deuced odd, you know—wasn't it?"

Captain Downey had not been idle in the meantime. He had persuaded Brixey so thoroughly of the benighted state in which two persons, new to the thing as he and Fribbles were, would find themselves on taking possession

of their shooting ground, that he had already proposed to the Captain to give them a week or ten days of his company at Tommiebeg. The latter, however, did not deem it expedient to be too ready in accepting the invitation. He promised to make an effort to do so, if he could by any possibility contrive to combine the host of engagements he had already in his book. He would greatly prefer, he said, as it would cut out better for his other arrangements, to go to Tommiebeg before he went to his friend Lord John's. His lordship was such a good fellow, and they were on such terms, he thought he might perhaps venture to propose giving him a week or so later in the season. Nor had the Captain in any sort neglected the younger gentleman. He had secured to himself the veneration and respect of Fribbles by displaying in conversation the most consummate knowledge of sporting in all its branches, from nurr-and-spell to fox-hunting; as well as by calling up occasional reminiscences of visits to this forest or that moor, when Lord This or Sir Harry That rented it. Besides all this, he had put Fribbles on the best possible terms with himself, by adroitly deferring to his opinion, by praising his judgment, and by ministering, in short, an occasional dose of flattery, delicately proportioned to the capacity of swallow and the digestive powers of the young man. He had watched the by-play going on with the Cromarty party, and saw in that, too, a prospect of his own advantage, in one way or another, either by favouring their designs or not, as might seem best. He saw with a glance through the male Cromarty, who, crafty and cunning as he was, was no match for the superior talent and insinuating address he was master of himself.

The last-named gentleman had, in conversation with the Captain, let drop quite "promiscuously" several little

hints relative to his own circumstances, his income, and his family—all of them intended to be picked up and applied. The Captain *did* pick them *all* up; and, accurately separating the "chaff," had thrown away all the rubbish, and stored up the genuine article. Indeed, the *tête-à-tête* dialogues between these two gentlemen might be likened not inaptly to a set-to with the gloves—both were good men and handled them cleverly, but the Captain had decidedly the best of the match. Each had a sort of instinctive perception of the other's being what is called in unclassical, but not the less expressive language, a humbug; and neither, we feel bound to say, was far from being right in his conjecture.

## CHAPTER XI.

Containing more about the Cromarty Family—The Founder of the Sect of Accumites — John Barleycorn — Reasons for Wearing the Kilt — Interesting Adventure of Adolphe Petitpain.

We must devote yet a few lines, for reasons best known to ourselves, to the Cromarty family. Of the opening chapters in the history of the head of it, Mr. Kenneth Cromarty, little was known beyond the fact of his having been, early in life, a hanger-on of a celebrated fast-going Baronet of the day, Sir Hector Popinjay, who had picked him up in the Cursaal, or some other place of public resort, at Baden-Baden, being captivated by his good looks and careless good humour. That he was strikingly handsome and singularly fascinating the Baronet had very soon ample reason to know, inasmuch as the second Miss Popinjay fell in love with him at sight, and ran away with him in a month. The angry Baronet never forgave his daughter, and the imprudent couple had lived abroad in retirement for years, until a distant relation of Cromarty's dying without a will, he became laird of the small property of Rogie, in Morayshire. They were blessed with seven daughters, two only of whom remained unmarried—the eldest and the youngest. The great end and aim of Cromarty's life for some years had been to marry his girls; he lost no opportunity of showing them off to the best advantage, and was not over-scrupulous in the means he

took of making the acquaintance of eligible young men, for the purpose of introducing them into his family.

It had been carefully instilled into the girls, from their earliest childhood, that all accomplishments were to be attained, and all talents to be cultivated, with one great object; that of establishing themselves comfortably—another word for finding rich husbands. The mother, who was a sensible, clever woman, and whose principal failing was the being unable to forget what she had been, for some time kept in check this manœuvring spirit of her lord's; but all his schemes had turned out so successfully, she saw so many of her children handsomely settled in life by his agency, that she now no longer opposed his plans, without, however, heartily encouraging them. The eldest, Ada, had already enacted the part of bridesmaid at the weddings of no less than five of her sisters; while she had been, either by reason of her own fastidiousness, or the bad taste of others, passed over; she now felt she had no time to lose, and was by no means backward in availing herself of all the chances and opportunities presented to her. Minna, the youngest of the family, was the only one who set her face resolutely against her papa's scheming. She happened, when quite a little girl, and either passed unnoticed altogether, or was thought of no importance, to overhear a conversation between some gentlemen on the subject of her father's manœuvring, and the indelicate manner in which he hawked about his daughters; a good deal was said besides about the ingenious way in which some man had been inveigled into proposing to one of her sisters. She never forgot it, and from that moment made up her mind never to serve as a bait to the matrimonial trap: so determined, moreover, had been her opposition, that they had long since tacitly renounced

any ventures on her account. Without absolutely intending to thwart the schemes as regarded her sisters; still, as she could not help feeling that a part of the disgrace of the transaction attached to herself as one of the family, she would generally either indulge her love of humour by "showing up" the poor quarry, pounced upon by her hawk of a father, with a view of convincing her sisters of the pigeon-like simplicity of the victim; or, when the poor bird was first attracted to the snare by the tempting bait set for him, she would try and frighten him away. Of course, as soon as his head was in the noose, she gave him up.

The family were now on their return to Rogie, from a two months' tour on the Continent. Ada was destined for Fribbles. She had her own consent and her parents'; only that of Fribbles was wanting; but Rogie was only ten short miles by the road from Tommiebeg, and much nearer by the moor. We should be too long getting to Aberdeen, were we to recount the clever acting of the young lady and the judicious management of her papa, in order to captivate the youth, nor will we tell the disgrace Minna got into with them for showing him up and drawing him out, processes in which she seemed to take intense delight, and in which Fribbles evidently took especial pleasure.

The weather continued to be most enjoyable; and as is the case usually under such circumstances there were very few absentees from table among the passengers, who had amalgamated exceedingly well. One new face, however, turned up at the second day's dinner; it belonged to a thin cadaverous body of a man, whese age might have been anything from thirty to sixty. He was buttoned up to the chin in a rough pilot coat, with enormous wooden buttons, and a mass of lank, straight, "unkempt" hair straggled on

his shoulders, and down his back. He had been observed by Brixey and others, who happened to be below, following the steward round the cabin, and regularly lifting the cover of every dish as it was placed on the table, re-covering it again with a groan expressive of strong disapprobation. The inspection over, he seated himself opposite a dish of boiled potatoes. It was not till the steward brought round the soup to him that his voice was heard :—

"Soup!" he cried, in a solemn tone. "Lord deliver me!"

"Very good soup, sir," said the steward. "Green pea, sir."

"Who asked you, young man, whether it was good or not? Take it away from under my nose. D'ye hear! Thames water and decayed vegetable matter!" he continued with a shudder.

"You don't get on, sir," said the little man to his discontented neighbour—"eat nothing—see your dinner—no game coming—rice pudding—gooseberry pie—cheese and salad—asked the cook—no time to lose—better begin. Feel poorly, perhaps? Glass of brandy and a biscuit—capital thing——"

"Sir," said the discontented man, solemnly, "I am sick at heart to see the pig-headedness, the wilfulness, the infatuation of mankind. In me, sir, you see the founder of the sect of Accumites. Honour to the great shade of Accum! of him who taught an ignorant people that all they ate and all they drank was rank poison! What a boon to his fellow men, to prove to them they were self immolators at the altar of gluttony! It is awful!" he continued, raising his hands in desperation, as he saw Fribbles fishing in a wide necked pickle jar, and trying to insert his fork in a slippery gherkin on which he had fixed his affections.

"Positively awful! Pickles! after all that has been said, and written, and proved. Vinegar thrice boiled in copper vessels; the folly of man can go no further—*green!*—*green*, indeed!"

"I say, you know"—said Fribbles, angrily, as he made a savage dig at the gherkin and secured it—he took the last remark as personal, and the laughing Minna was exactly opposite to him. "Dash it, you know, if you come to that,—you look to me as if you had eaten a few too many yourself; uncommon pale you *do* look, to be sure."

"Pale! think so, indeed," said the little man, looking fixedly at his neighbour. "Quite chalky. Steward, gentleman ill—over-ate himself—wants to retire."

"D'rectly, sir," said the steward, who was engaged at the moment in unfastening the wire of a bottle of soda water; having done which, he directed the cork straight at the face of the gentleman whose attacks on the commissariat he had for some time indignantly listened to, and succeeded in distributing the greater part of its contents over him, causing him thereby to vacate in haste his seat at the table.

As this was the last meal on board the steamer, it was made an excuse for the gentlemen of the party prolonging the sitting after dinner, and indulging in an extra glass or toddy, in the brewing of which admirable preparation Brixey had received a lesson from the minister the day before, and now found himself an apt scholar, not only making himself thoroughly master of the first principles, but in immediately applying and digesting the matter. In order to complete the education of his pupil, the old gentleman enlarged copiously and verbosely on the virtues of the liquid—not that it needed much eloquence to make Brixey a perfect convert to his opinions. The great authority cited by him was Robert Burns, of whom he

professed himself an enthusiastic admirer. "Ye'll remember," he said, as he filled his glass leisurely from the tumbler, with the wooden toddy-ladle, "his address to John Barleycorn:—

> Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
> What dangers thou canst mak' us scorn!
> Wi' tippenny we fear nae evil,
> Wi' usquebae——

Which means just good maut whiskey—

> Wi' usquebae we'll face the ——

Ah! weel! no matter what we'll face—the pearson's name shall be nameless. And then, again, do ye no mind where he sings:—

> Fortune! if thou'lt but gie me still
> Hale breeks, a scone, an' whisky gill,
> An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,
> Tak' a' the rest."

"Hale breeks!" said Brixey. "What are hale breeks?"

"Eh?" replied the minister, "they'll be just a hale—that is to say, a well-favoured pair of breeches."

"Oh!" said Brixey, "I see. Till this moment, I always thought the Scotchmen wore kilts by choice; but as their favourite poet invokes Dame Fortune for a variety of good things, and makes his *first* request a good pair of breeches, I perceive at once why kilts are worn,—a matter of necessity."

"Ye're wrang, man—ye're wrang; it's a poetical leecence. Poor Burns had no a kilt in his mind when he sang that song under the inspeeration o' John Barleycorn. He had, it's mair likely, sair's the disgrace to them that

should hae gien him a helping hand, a hungry stomach and a tattered suit of claes."

"Tattered clothes!" said the little man, purposely interrupting the worthy minister in the middle of a favourite topic, on which he had already dilated much at large, and addressing himself to Fribbles. "Tattered clothes! Something like you came out in—this morning—extempore shell-jacket—funny figure. Ladies screeched with laughing—thought I didn't see you, perhaps. But it don't signify."

Fribbles felt and looked intensely disgusted at this public allusion to a laughable accident which had happened to him in the morning, and which he fondly hoped had had but few witnesses. As the sun was hot, Fribbles had put on one of those shapeless whitey-brown-paper-looking garments made in the Strand, and advertised by some barbarous name. He had been sitting on deck with the Cromartys, drinking in large draughts of love. Minna dropped her thimble: he started up hastily to pursue it as it rolled on the deck. Now it happened crossly, as things will sometimes, that the bench on which Fribbles had been sitting was constructed of open spars, and the pocket of this diaphane coat, containing sundry heavy and bulky objects, had dropped through the bars, disposing itself in such a way as not readily to be drawn out. Thus it came to pass that when the youth suddenly jumped up, there was a horrid sound of rending, and the unfortunate Fribbles found himself, as the tiresome little man had happily described it, in a remarkably short shell-jacket, the greater portion of the garment remaining entangled in the bench. He had rushed headlong from the deck, and was now for the first time reminded of the vexatious event.

The little man seeing him look angry, and even menacing, went on to console him. "It don't signify—useless tackle in the Highlands—only get laughed at—much better torn up and flung away. Going a shooting? Don't envy you—grouse shooting, hard life—made game of yourself, too—Saxons all fair game—walked into by everybody—never been there before?"

Fribbles was too sulky to reply; so Brixey did for him, in the negative.

"Bad job! quite lost—fancy I see you lost in the moors—something like the Frenchman in Regent Street."

"What was that, sir, if I may ask—what had happened to him?"

"Oh!" replied the other. "Great Exhibition—Adolphe Petitpain took fancy to go. Never been in London—only knew four words of English."

"Pray what were those words?" asked Brixey.

"Yes—no—eefupleece, and oodooyoodoo—short allowance. Made up his mind, however—went to Auguste—friend of his—knew London well, Auguste did—passed a week once in Leicester Square. Asked his advice. 'Mon cher!' says Auguste, 'Londres is not to be compared with Paris. No Boulevards—no cafés—no theatres on Sundays. Hard names to streets, too—Peckeedeelee Street—Scharangrose Street—Scheepsaïde Street. Quel baragouin! what gibberish! Sure to forget them; but,' says he, 'name of every street is printed in big letters at every corner—copy it carefully on slip of paper—present it with politeness to the first person you meet—he will direct you.' The friends kissed one another on both cheeks, and parted. Adolphe, delighted with London, went to Exhibition in omnibus—walked back—turned up Regent Street—walked up one side, and down the other, and then back again—got

tired at last—thought of his paper—name written down—took it out of black satin waistcoat pocket, unfolded it—nice little boy came along, with basket on his arm—Adolphe pulled off his hat, made a low bow, presented the paper, and said, 'Eefupleece!' 'Oh, ah!—I see—all right,' said the little boy, with great glee. 'Over the left,' he added, making a sign with his right thumb over his left shoulder, thereby clearly indicating—in manner thoroughly insular—way to Adolphe's street. Adolphe changed his course—got to Quadrant again—still no wiser—saw a policeman—took off his hat again—made a bow—presented scrap of paper—said as before, 'Eefupleece!' Policeman looked hard at him—then at scrap of paper—then at him again—made some remark Adolphe did not understand—sounded like 'Welluararummunaseverisee!' and then turned on his heel. Adolphe—in despair—turned again up Regent Street—rushed along recklessly—sombre ideas took possession of him. Saw at last a glove shop—in the window, gilt frame—black ground—gold letters, 'Ici on parle Français.' Seized with transport of joy, insanely precipitated himself into shop. Handsome young lady behind the counter—took off his hat—smiled sweetly through his black beard and moustache—produced his scrap of paper once more, and in the most winning tone inquired of mam'selle if she would have the *bonté* to tell him the way to Steekenobeelse Street. Young lady—dreadfully alarmed—took him for a maniac,—shrieked for assistance—ordered people to turn out the foreigneering fellow—Adolphe bundled neck and heels out of glove shop—found him stamping on his hat, and tearing his hair, on pavement—told me his story."

"An' can ye mind," asked the old minister, "how the street was named on the bit paper?"

"No street at all!" answered the little man. "Copied

down words—written up at corner of street—'Stick no Bills'—had no idea of name of street or hotel—didn't signify—took him home."

"But, if I may ask," said Brixey, "how did you find out the street and the hotel?"

"Easy enough," replied the other. "Took him straight to Leicester Square—all right enough, of course—took me for a conjuror."

## CHAPTER XII.

Arrival at Aberdeen—Ponto and a respectable Female—Disinterested Conduct of the Captain—A Conjugal *Tête-à-tête.*

We have already observed that the scene of confusion and bustle of the hour of embarkation of passengers on board a sea-going steamer is more or less exciting, but it is tame in comparison with that which takes place as soon as the vessel nears her port of destination. In the former case only a few of the company are on the stage at once, as the passengers appear only by instalments. The action is then spread over a longer period of time; each individual character in succession plays his part, after which he becomes as one of the spectators. In the latter case, the entire company come forward at once to form a group in the last scene of the drama; and not the actors alone, but with them all their "properties"—machinery, dresses, and decorations, are brought to the fore. Boxes of tin and boxes of wood, in canvas covering and with no covering; portmanteaus of patent solid leather, and portmanteaus of leather neither patent nor solid; hat boxes and bonnet boxes, gun cases and fishing-tackle cases, carpet bags and leather bags, are piled in an apparently inextricable mass. How readily the old stager may be picked out from the crowd, and how plainly the neophyte stands confessed, as he makes this his first appearance on these *boards!* While the one has already secured a porter, and is quietly designating to him the different articles belonging to him as they lie in

their several strata, the other is rushing insanely about, with plaid on arm and faggot of umbrellas and canes in hand, abusing everything and everybody in the hopeless attempt to get at his effects by his own unassisted efforts.

Fribbles, by nature impetuous, had distinguished himself greatly in the scrimmage; nor is there any knowing what reckless line of conduct he would have pursued, had not his very clever new acquaintance, Captain Downey, come to the rescue. The latter had already succeeded in getting Brixey's luggage extricated, and a few minutes sufficed to enable him to secure the belongings of the whole party.

"How about the dogs?" asked Brixey of the Captain.

"By-the-bye—yes, to be sure!" returned the other, "I'll see about it." (And then, in an aside,) "Confound the brutes; as if I had not enough already on my hands. We had better," he continued aloud, "let one of the sailors bring them up to the Royal Hotel—you put up there, I suppose? I always do. We dine together, I hope?" Thus saying he was going forward to give instructions about the animals, when a piercing shriek was heard, and a rush was instantly made by all the crowd in the direction whence it proceeded. It was no easy matter to ascertain the cause of this horrible *fracas*. The shrieks continued, and an obligato accompaniment of growling as well. Brixey's heart sank within him. You might (as he said afterwards) have knocked him down with a feather. He had heard that growl before under circumstances the most alarming—he could never forget that growl.

The growl was in truth the growl of Ponto, and the shrieks were the shrieks of an old lady and her parrot combined. The first thing to do, was to extricate the big brass cage containing the parrot, which the dog was busily rolling over and over, biting the while savagely at the wires,

the poor bird now on its head, now on its back, flapping its wings wildly and screaming with all its might. It was difficult to come at the rights of the matter. There was a rambling, incoherent attempt at explanation made by the old lady, as soon as she became sufficiently composed to speak about a sausage roll, wrapped up in a pocket hankicher, which Ponto had violently appropriated and converted to his own uses—that is, the sausage roll, not the pocket handkerchief—"and then, lor bless you, if he didn't show his ugly teeth, the brute, and putting his nose agin the cage, the parrot bit him, bless her heart! and drawed him away from me with my gownd all in tatters with his teeth—here you see! Bless'ee, my sweet bird!" ejaculated the old female, embracing the cage, as soon as it was rescued from Ponto, and the latter secured with a cord through his collar.

"Bow! wow! wow!" exclaimed the bird ironically, as he shook himself and smoothed his ruffled feathers.

The sailor who had claimed old acquaintance with Blazer was commissioned to convey the dogs to the hotel, where in the course of an hour or so our travellers, including Captain Downey, were comfortably seated at dinner.

"I say, you know," said Fribbles, as he finished his last spoonful of soup, "hang me if this is at all the sort of thing I expected. Why, how many miles is it from here to London? A matter of four hundred, I suppose. Well, I don't see much difference in the people, and the streets; and this hotel, you know, is first-rate, and this sherry is tip-top," he continued, smacking his lips and setting down his glass. "Not half bad, that ain't. But, I say, all the Scotch towns are not like this, are they? Because if they are, a fellow might as well be at home, for anything new that is to be seen. I've read, however, that in India, and

America, and those parts, the seaport towns sometimes are all right enough, like our places, you know, in England; but when you get up into the country, it's quite different, with its prairies and jungles, its wigwams and bungalows and palanquins, and I dare say it is so here up in Scotland. But I must say I did expect to have seen a few of the natives—the real Highlanders, you know—walking about the streets."

"You will not find the kilt worn so generally as you seem to expect," said the Captain; "it is confined almost entirely to the shepherds on the hills in the remoter districts."

"Why," exclaimed Fribbles, "those fellows at the club told me everybody wore it."

"It is often worn on the moors shooting, and you will find it a very good dress for the purpose."

"At any rate," pursued Fribbles, "if it's a national costume, I don't see why a fellow should not wear it. When people go to Rome they always do as the Romans do—at least I've always heard they do. I shall put my kilt on to-morrow. It's Sunday, by-the-bye."

"Surely," put in Brixey, in a tone of alarm, "surely you cannot mean to expose yourself in such a way. Why, we shall have all the little boys in Aberdeen running after us, if you wear that dress you got in London, and which is only fit for a fancy-ball or a masquerade."

Now Fribbles's resolution to wear his so-called Highland dress had been taken the day before, in consequence of a conversation he had had with the younger Miss Cromarty, who, on learning that he had provided himself with a dress at the celebrated emporium in Regent Street, had expressed considerable satisfaction thereat. She had told him that his adopting the national costume would be a very pretty compliment to the Scottish nation, and let him infer that she should

accordingly appropriate to herself a share of it. Having, then, promised her that he would not fail to wear the dress, and being firmly resolved to keep his word, he was not over-pleased at the remarks of his friend Brixey, which, to say the least of it, savoured rather of contempt. So he ate his dinner in a dignified silence, tending little to promote the hilarity of the party, and took an early opportunity of leaving the table, without thinking it incumbent on him to mention that he had engaged himself to drink tea with the Cromartys.

Cromarty *Père* was a model father. He never lost a chance for his children. It was quite instructive to see the tact with which he made his first advances towards the acquaintance of any desirable young man; and really edifying to mark the insidious, though apparently frank and hearty, manner of his proceedings afterwards. More than one of his sons-in-law had found himself engaged, he knew not how, and could hardly decide to which of the young ladies—but engaged he was, sure enough.

Having fixed upon Fribbles as a desirable connection, he was not long in making the discovery that to land him after he had taken the bait, did not require any excessively delicate handling. It was like getting a good fish (fish means salmon, north of the Tweed) well hooked, in easy water, with plenty of room. He saw at once that very little line would be required, and that he might "play him hard," as it is called.

There was only one difficulty—one ugly rock in the stream to keep clear of. This was simply the circumstance that whereas it was expedient that Ada, his eldest-born, should become Mrs. Fribbles, it was clear to the sharp-sighted parent how that the youth was attracted more by the *beaux yeux* of Minna, who could afford to wait some years

longer, and whose personal attractions indeed now justified the hope of his making a splendid match for her. All this was untoward, certainly; but after all it was not of vital importance. The main thing, at first, was to attract the youth by some means or other.

To continue our piscatorial illustration. Like as the crafty angler, when he repaireth to the river a-fishing for the gudgeon or the roach (to either of which silly fishes our friend Fribbles may be compared, rather than to the noble genus *Salmo*), casteth first into the water a cunningly-devised ground-bait, to allure the fishes to the place of sacrifice; and, lastly, when they be congregated to this pleasant food, he baiteth his hook anon, and droppeth it into the very midst, with certainty of good success—so angled Papa Cromarty for the unsuspecting Fribbles; and if ever silly fish hovered about the fisher's lure, so did that interesting youth find himself irresistibly attracted to the side of the pretty Minna.

The invitation to tea had been given by old Cromarty as Fribbles was shaking hands with the young ladies on quitting the steamer. Ada had just been expressing her regret at the breaking up of so pleasant a party. "It is the penalty of going about the world," she said, tenderly, "the making agreeable acquaintances, and then losing sight of them for ever——"

"Ah! my boy!" broke in Papa, with a hearty, cheery voice, as he joined them; "going away, eh? Well. God bless you! You won't quite forget us, I hope. It won't require seven-league boots to walk over the hills to my place. I assure you—and I am not in the habit of making professions—it 's not my way—don't like it—all fair and above board with me. I say—ar—it will be a real pleasure to us all to see you again—eh! my dears?"

"Oh yes, Papa," answered Ada, for self and sister; "we shall be so glad to see Mr. Fribbles again——"

"You are going to the 'Royal,' I suppose," remarked Papa. "Ah! that 's lucky; so are we. Look in upon us in the evening, like a good fellow, if you 've nothing better to do. When Mama and the girls are gone to bed we 'll have a quiet cigar together. I have got some Cabanas; I want to have your opinion of them."

"Now you know, Papa, we always let you smoke your cigars—we like the smell very much," said Ada (for self and Co. again); "I am sure *I* shall not go to bed early."

"Just like you, dear girl!" said the Papa fondly. "Well, well, you shall do as you please, girls! Oh! my dear young friend," he continued, as they walked together to the side of the vessel, "you don't know that girl, so gentle, so amiable, so fond of her old——"

This feeling panegyric on his daughter was very unpleasantly interrupted by the tipping over of a gun case, which fell upon his toes, and in the meantime Fribbles found himself carried on by the stream of passengers to the pier, happy in the chance afforded him so unexpectedly of keeping up such a desirable acquaintance.

And so he passed a most delicious evening with the Cromartys in room No. 8, having as little suspicion of the coil that was being skilfully wound round him, as his friend Brixey had of the serpentine guile of his companion, who was smoking his cigar so complacently with him in No. 3.

If Captain Downey excelled in any one thing, it was in the facility he had of adapting himself at once and instinctively to the company with whom it was his object to ingratiate himself. He had made a science of it. In course of conversation with Brixey, he had given him in truth a vast deal of useful information and advice for his future

guidance, as to the how and the where to lay in the necessary stores, making out detailed lists of the different objects, many of which would scarcely have occurred to the unsophisticated mind of his listener. Of his disinterestedness in all this the reader will of course make his own conclusions, and the readier perhaps when he learns that he has written to his noble friend, to intimate that he should put off his visit to him till later in the season, and that he has promised Brixey to give him a week or ten days just to set him going at Tommiebeg. There was a frankness in the Captain's manner very captivating and congenial to the honest nature of Brixey—the kind way in which he seemed to identify himself with his and Fribbles's interests was gratifying in the extreme, and he blessed the chance which had placed him so completely on his legs in such an emergency as the present one. It never occurred to Brixey to notice the growth of his state of utter dependence on the Captain now established, and with which it had been the object of the latter to impress him—so cleverly, so carefully, and yet to all appearances so carelessly, had this been instilled into his innocent mind.

Before they parted for the night it had been arranged that they should leave Aberdeen by the "Rattler" coach on the Monday morning, on which the Captain's foresight had already secured places for the party.

"Upon my life, I had quite forgotten——" exclaimed the Captain in a tone of vexation, as he was lighting his chamber candle. "I am sadly afraid, after all, I shan't be able to join you on Monday, and I may not be able to get on for a day or two. You can't think how difficult it is to get places just at this season. If it had not been for the chance of the head of a party being taken ill, we should perhaps have had to wait a week, or to post——"

"Why! what has happened?" inquired the surprised and dismayed Brixey; "what makes you change your plans?"

"Oh! well, it is a bore certainly; but you see I have unfortunately had the stupidity to get a credit on the banking house here instead of at Inverness. It was rather more handy for Lord John's place, you know, and, the fact is, I am run out completely, so I must wait here till banking hours; and perhaps, as it turns out so, I had better not post my letter to my noble friend, and go to him first as originally intended. It *is* a bore, though; for if there 's one thing I like, it is the starting of a new *ménage* in the Highlands. It is one of the things I rather pique myself upon. You know it won't signify much to you whether I go to you now or a few weeks hence, as I have primed you pretty well—Mind! I promise faithfully to give you a day or two before I go south."

"Eh! but—oh! no, by no means! my dear sir!" cried Brixey; "if that is all, the affair is easily managed—consider me your banker for the present—now let me entreat of you"—as the other thankfully but with some hesitation rejected the friendly offer—"no! no! make no apologies, my dear sir—let us consider the thing as done—it is doing me a favour——"

"Well, really," said the Captain, "I am almost ashamed—it is really an obligation I should positively have felt considerable delicacy in laying myself under to an old friend--a——"

'And may I not hope, my dear sir, to be ranked as such some day? Come, say you will not desert us."

"Well, well," responded the Captain, with a show of acting against his own judgment in deference to the feelings of Brixey, "if it must be so, it must. There 's no resisting you. Good night, then, my dear sir, good

night!" he exclaimed in a cordial tone, as he opened the door.

"I've managed that capitally," said Brixey to himself. "What a nice fellow he is—so straightforward and gentleman-like. It is uncommonly kind of him, to be sure, to come to us first;" and in a happy frame of mind he betook himself to his bedroom, No. 4.

Meanwhile a conjugal *tête-à-tête* is taking place in No .7, the apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Cromarty.

"Oh! for the matter of that, my dear," replied the lady, "the young man would be well enough if he was not such a fool."

"Now—*there* again, my dear, you are wrong," interrupted Papa; "wrong altogether. If he was not such a fool, you say. Now, it is scarcely fair to put it in such strong terms. Mr. Fribbles may be, and is certainly—there's no denying it—not quite so clever—and—a—so up to—a thing or two (shall I say?) as many young men of his age—but, my dear, *there—there* is precisely—if I could only make you see it in a proper point of view—the beauty of the thing."

"You mean, I suppose, that Ada has brains enough for two."

"Don't—don't express yourself so strongly, my dear. I say, rather, that the good sense and judgment of our dear girl—bless her!—will be a delightful counterpoise to the—a—the——"

"Want of common sense, you mean," interrupted the lady. "It is no use mincing words between ourselves. The fact of the matter is this, the young man is a simpleton—a noodle—and I am not so sure it would be for Ada's happiness. Then, again, you know nothing about him, except from the old gentleman——"

"Now—dearest—I beg—I must entreat of you—put some confidence in your husband's judgment and experience. *That* is my department. You know best whether I have made any mistakes hitherto in the establishment of our other dear ones." (This was always old Cromarty's *cheval-de-bataille*—a something to fall back upon whenever Mrs. C. showed any restiveness.) "*You* know best—perhaps I *have* taken certain means to obtain correct and authentic intelligence of the—a—the—shall I say the young man's income and expectancies? But, my dear," he added, impressively, "as I have my duties to perform, let me remind you, that you too have to bear your part in our domestic arrangements. Now, I must say—I can't help saying I feel hurt—very—and annoyed, at the way Minna goes on. Why, she has done nothing but quiz the poor young man the whole evening. Yes—well—he is not, as you remark—very thin skinned—that is true enough; but it may be possible to carry a joke too far. You see, my dear, her sister's happiness being, as I may say—a—bound up with young Mr. Fribbles——"

"Now, for goodness sake, Mr. Cromarty, do speak plain. What is the use of trying to mystify me? You go on in this way till you believe all these absurdities yourself. The long and the short of it is just this—you have made up your mind——"

"Say rather, my dear—*we*—*we* have made up *our* minds."

"Well—*peu importe*—no matter. *We*, then, have decided that Ada is to become Mrs. Fribbles, and *your* object is——"

"Now, my dear, I earnestly beg of you—*do* say *our*—*our* object."

"How tiresome you are to-night, Mr. Cromarty. *Our*

object, then, is to bring about this affair, as soon as maybe."

"Nothing could be stated fairer. And what I am desirous, my dear, of impressing on your intelligent mind, is the necessity of checking the—ar—playfulness, shall I call it?—of our darling Minna. I may be wrong; but don't you think the young man is rather—a—rather taken with *her?*"

"Of course he is, my dear—any one may see that—and there is where I do not see my way clearly. I must think of my child's happiness——"

"And yet, my love, if you will only try just for once to recall to your retentive memory certain passages in the—a—the courtships of more than one of our dear sons-in-law, you will be willing to admit that my diplomacy has always served us in circumstances—a—not materially differing from the case in point. You may, at the same time, be brought to confess that, in each instance, the result of the—a—negotiation—has been eminently successful. Leave it to me, my dear. I see *my* way clearly enough—only you really must endeavour to prevail on dear Minna to be a leetle more—a—discreet, shall I say? There is, however, one hitch I don't much like. You know that tall, rather gentlemanlike sort of fellow, with the big whiskers, on board the boat? I mean the man young Fribbles spoke of taking to the lodge. Now, that individual I don't like. I have a great idea he is an adventurer, who has fastened on Fribbles and his friend to get something out of them. I am not often mistaken in such cases. I take him to be one of those sharp fellows who live on their wits, without being very scrupulous as to the means they employ. Now, I shouldn't be surprised if that man had some abominable scheme to entrap one or the other——"

"To marry them to his daughters, perhaps," interposed his better half, half serious, half in jest.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed he. "You have me there, my dear. I owe you one. But, seriously, we must keep our eye upon him."

## CHAPTER XIII.

A Word to the Reader—More Eaves-dropping—Fribbles's first Appearance in the Highland Garb—A Ghost—A Tableau—The Plot thickens.

In pursuing this veracious narrative, it has been our design to clear up everything as we go—to have no arrears—to leave nothing behind us—differing in this from other authors, who, regardless of the feelings of their readers, depart from the straight road, and induce them to go back to fetch some object left behind, thereby detaining them on their way, and putting, as it were, a skid on the wheel of interest, which ought to go on ever rolling to the end of the journey.

It is in such spirit as this we endeavour to lay bare the characters of the several individuals who figure in our history, and in this laudable object we have not scrupled to avail ourselves of certain privileges conceded to us authors. If any of our very conscientious readers consider we have abused those advantages, we advise him to lay aside our book, that his or her delicacy be not shocked. We have a duty to perform—we cannot shrink from it; and this duty leads us—no—not to intrude into the sanctity of No. 9—*that* we will not do, for it is the sleeping-chamber of the two sisters; but we must, Asmodeus-like, listen to their conversation, and, having listened, betray.

"For the life of me, I cannot help laughing whenever I think of it," said the younger of the two. "It is too

absurd. Fancy that long-legged, gawky boy in a kilt! I shall die. And then the way the silly thing took in all I told him!"

"Now, Minna," answered the elder sister, "I must say I do not think you have shown very good taste in your treatment of Mr. Fribbles, or in going on as you do now."

"Speaking irreverently of the charming youth, eh? I had better have all my fun now, for when he becomes my brother-in-law I suppose I shall be expected to see him with more sober eyes."

"I am sure, for the matter of that," replied the elder sister, tartly, "to judge from appearances, it is yourself who are destined to be the happy proprietor of your laughing-stock."

"No, no; I altogether abandon any sort of claim I may have on the affections of the young gentleman. Besides, has it not been announced to me officially that you are the bride elect? I could not be so heartless as to rival you. No, dearest, I resign him—perhaps not without a pang, for he is such fun! I give him up to you for better or for worse, and so on; but, indeed, I do wish he would transfer a trifle more of his attentions to the proper quarter."

"That is spiteful of you now, Minna, when you know all the time you have been coquetting in the most barefaced manner with him; and I may as well tell you, once for all, that *I* don't at all see him with your eyes. *I* think he is a gentlemanly young man, and only wants a little mixing with the world to become rather distinguished-looking. So you will be pleased to recollect, Minna, that in indulging your love of satire you are wounding my feelings."

"Only give me to-morrow, Ada, dear—just give me

leave only for one day—to see him in a London-made kilt in the streets of serious Aberdeen! and on a Sunday, too, of all the days in the week! He will be the death of me!"

Fribbles's room was on the second floor. The happy youth had retired thither in a transport of delight at the reception he had met with from his hospitable friends below, and was soon busily occupied in unpacking and laying out his Highland costume, that it might be ready for the morrow, confident in the "stunning" effect it must produce upon all beholders. Having brought to light the different parts of which it was composed, it occurred to him that it would not be a bad move to put it on then and there, in order that he might familiarise himself with it a little. Now the getting into a new costume of any kind is no easy matter; and to such of our readers as are aware of the complications of the kilt, it will be acknowledged that Fribbles had a difficult task before him. True it is that, with the assistance of the expert Messrs. Picolls, he had been trussed at all points in the robing-room, and had admired himself in the long pier-glasses so arranged as to give him a good view of himself back and front. Everything seemed so easy, and every portion of the dress seemed to adapt itself so naturally to his figure, that he took it for granted it would be all plain-sailing to dress himself at any future time unassisted, without making any mistakes. In this view of the case he was warmly seconded by Messrs. Picolls's assistant, who, having other pressing calls upon his time and talents, could not afford to waste them, and was anxious to get rid of his customer.

Somehow or other, nothing now seemed to come into its place; to be sure, he had managed to get everything on, but the result was far from satisfactory. Something was

wrong somewhere,—and what with altering the set of the philabeg, and twisting the plaid into all sorts of untold folds, he was still at a loss to know where the mistake could be, when his candle, which had in the meantime been burning low in the socket, totally unheeded by the pre-occupied Fribbles, gave one expiring gleam and all was darkness.

So much time had been spent in the all-absorbing business of dressing, that it was now very late, and the household had all betaken themselves to bed. He found the bell at last. (Why are the bells in bed-rooms so often put in impossible places?) He pulled the cord, and waited some minutes in great anxiety for the result, not without some unpleasant misgivings as to the effect his appearance might produce on the chamber-maid or waiter who might answer the summons. Every second seemed a minute—every minute an hour. No one came. He pulled again a long pull and a strong pull, thereby bringing down upon his head the upper gear of the apparatus, and there he was with the bell-rope in his hand.

In no enviable state of mind, he debated within himself what was next to be done. He opened the door: all was dark—all was still—he was in the passage—he remembered perfectly there were two steps somewhere, and then a turn to the right led to the staircase. There *must* be somebody stirring in so large an establishment,—he would go and see.

Down the stairs he went, groping carefully his way, and holding on by the rail. He was landed somewhere. He recalled to mind he had now to go along a passage some distance, and this he did, stumbling now and then on various small obstacles in his way. And now all sense of recollection failed him suddenly. Should he go back?—if he did it would be only to throw himself on the bed

clothed as he was, and to wait for daylight. It was not to be thought of. Brixey's room must be somewhere hereabouts—he must try and find it. Brixey was a careful man, and was sure to have a lucifer match in his dressing-case, and there would be the remainder of his candle. It was not a bad idea; but—how to find the room? It was certainly on the right of the passage.

In the merry game of blindman's buff, we remember that, as soon as the bandage was fastened over our eyes, we were led into the middle of the room and whirled round and round while sundry cabalistic verses were recited, the burden of them being that we were to "catch whom we may." The effect of this turning round and round was to mystify us more completely as to the localities: in like manner, it is not difficult to understand that the most cautious individual may, after groping about in the dark for some time up and down the gallery in a strange house, lose altogether the points of the compass. Thus it happened to our friend Fribbles, who became now as helpless and forlorn as one of the "babes in the wood." He began also to find that the sudden change from the trowsers to the kilt had its disadvantages, in that it might be likened, not inappropriately, in effect to that which would be produced by the eccentricity of leaving off, in ordinary life,—say, for instance, in Hyde Park or St. James's Street,—the nether garments in which we had been brought up from the day we were breeched, and appearing in public, a real "*sans culottes.*" This would be considered a cool proceeding anywhere in the southern parts of Britain, and this was precisely what Fribbles thought here in the North. He began to feel very cool about the legs.

He had been wandering about some time, making football of the boots and shoes in his path, when stumbling

against a chair which the prudent Cromarty had set outside his door with his clothes for brushing, it toppled over, and made such a noise that the terrified Fribbles, feeling hastily for the door handle, rushed recklessly into a room just as the head of a man appeared on the staircase from below—the dim glimmer of a feeble lamp lighting it up and discovering it to be enveloped in a red worsted comforter. Slowly the head was followed by the shoulders, and then was heard in a croaking sort of whisper, indicative of fear or caution, or both—

"Wha 's yon?"

"Wha 's yon?" in a louder key.

As no answer was returned, the rest of the body gradually showed itself, and a very remarkable figure it presented, as it glided slowly and noiselessly along the gallery, one hand holding on high the dull flickering lamp before it, which gave a ghastly effect to the wrinkled features of the frightened bearer. A shepherd's plaid was thrown carelessly over the upper man, and gave no protection to a pair of thin bony legs, the extremities of which progressed in a pair of roomy slippers of yellow worsted.

"Wha—a—'s yon?" again demanded this strange object, in a shaky voice, showing still much perturbation. "Deed I 'm thinking it 's no that canny—mair likely t'will be Bogles—ech! save us! saw ony man ever the likes o' that?" and stooping down, the figure, who was none other than the porter of the house, lowered his lamp to note the unusual disturbance among the boots and shoes, which had been kicked about by Fribbles, and were thrown pell-mell about the passage.

"It 's wark there 'll be for Donald the day—and *that* the Sabbath—the claes too a' heapit thegither——Ugh! ——Ugh!"

A deep groan of affright burst from him, which cannot be written so as to convey any correct idea of its accents.

"U——g——h!"

The hapless Fribbles had cautiously peeped out from the door of the room in which he had taken refuge, and his pale face, surmounted by a Glengarry bonnet with long peacock's feathers across it, came within range of the old man's vision. The lamp fell from his hand, and a heavy fall told that the poor fellow had yielded to his terror.

A few minutes sufficed to bring the tenants of the various rooms into the passage,—some with lights, some too terrified to have preserved any presence of mind whatever. Female shrieks were heard, and angry voices of men half awake. It was indeed a scene to beggar description.

Brixey, with a blanket uncomfortably thrown over his shoulders, was among the first. The Captain was there, gorgeous in many-coloured dressing-gown and slippers of verdant hue,—Cromarty, the flannel petticoat of his faithful partner over his head, was making a difficult manœuvre to advance, his chivalrous ardour being checked from behind by a vigorous pulling at the ample skirts of his nightly raiment. Many besides were present, the names of whom to write would be tedious.

In less time than it takes to tell it, the motley crowd was gathered round the unfortunate porter who was seated on the floor, staring wildly about him, utterly unable to give any account of himself, and pointing with his long bony finger to the door at which he had seen the apparition, muttered the words—"The Bogle! The Bogle!"

Now on this door was to be seen marked "No. 8." It

was that of a sitting-room situated between the bed-room of the parent Cromartys and that of the young ladies of the family, having an inner door of communication with each.

After a time it was voted expedient to make a move in that direction, and it was worthy of remark how "backward" everybody seemed "in coming forward" to take the initiative.

"My room, by all that's wonderful!" exclaimed Cromarty. "Let me beg of you, gentlemen, to walk in. I'm at home there, you know. No ceremony, pray."

"Papa! Papa!" cried two well known voices in chorus from the adjoining room. "Oh! dear Papa, there's something in that room—we heard it cough——"

"Bless my heart! let us go in at once. Gentlemen, I will follow you," said the anxious parent, bowing ceremoniously, and motioning with his hand for the rest to take precedence.

"Mr. Cromarty, I am ashamed of you," cried a voice behind him, "let me pass. *I* will go to the dear girls;" and Mama Cromarty, in fearful nightcap, and enveloped in a counterpane, snatched hastily from the bed, walked boldly into the haunted chamber, followed by the rest of the group.

The Bogle stood confest. There, in the middle of the room, the ashy paleness of his face contrasting violently with the rich scarlet tints of the Stuart tartan, stood the guilty Fribbles.

"Hech! sirs! that's just him—haud him fast by the lug, or he'll be above the chimla or ye can ca' parritch," croaked a feeble voice from the rear.

"A—a—upon my life—a—I would not have believed it—never," were the words of the Cromarty who led the

van. He was hesitating what line to take, but a moment's reflection made him equal to the occasion. "Gentlemen," said he, impressively, turning to the now shivering assembly, "I call you all to witness—I say, gentlemen, I call you to witness."

"Well, I didn't do it on purpose," interrupted Fribbles in a plaintive voice.

"Mark those words, gentlemen!" continued Cromarty; "this—a—individual (shall I say?) says he did not do it on purpose. Do *what* on purpose, gentlemen? This person—I call him a person—whom not many hours since I received with hospitality, introduced to my family, treated as a friend, parted with in—I may say—terms of intimacy, takes advantage of the blackness of night: it—a—unmans me to think of it. Gentlemen!" he said this in trembling accents, and pointing to a door in the room, "that opens into the sleeping chamber of my two dear daughters. I find this—a—person here—here! Did he come here on purpose, or did he not come here on purpose? If he did not, then why, I would ask, is he thus conspicuously attired?"

"Oh! come, I say, you know," broke in the now excited youth; "it's no good making a row about nothing, you know. The fact is——"

"Facts—facts are stubborn things, sir! Facts are—facts require explanation—satisfactory explanation." Saying this, the Cromarty, proudly adjusting his flannel drapery as if it had been a kingly robe, stalked majestically into his own room, followed by the lady of the counterpane.

"Peter, I should not have suspected you of such conduct as this; I am disgusted, quite. Sad this will be for your poor mother," said Brixey, as he moved off.

"Hech, sirs! an' there 'll be sair spiering for ane's ain

the morn; wi' a' the boots, an' the shoon, an' the claes, an' a' sae hotched an' tossit a' thegither," were the departing words of the old porter, as he crept away to his lair below stairs.

"Dash it, you know," said the cause of all this confusion to the Captain, who alone remained in the room with him; "this is all gammon, this is. My candle went out, and I lost my way—"

"All right, old fellow," answered the Captain, applying his forefinger significantly to his nose. "Devilish unlucky being caught out."

"No; but, 'pon my honour——"

"Oh! yes, of course; I understand; keep it dark. But it is rather cold work standing here all this time; come along to my room, and I'll give you a light. Your number is up-stairs, I think; you mistook the room, I suppose. Ha! ha! ha! *That* will hardly go down: you'll never get a jury to believe that. A neat get up, that tartan of yours—just a shade too bright; a quieter colour is better for *deer*-stalking. By-the-bye," continued he, when they had got to his room, and he was cutting off the half of his candle for Fribbles, "the old gentleman looks pugnacious. You will hear from him, see if you don't, the first thing in the morning. If anything unpleasant should occur, you will find a friend in me. Don't attempt to act without consulting me; I will take care to put you in a good position. And now, good night! pleasant dreams!"

And the Captain, shaking Fribbles affectionately by the hand, closed his door upon him, leaving the unlucky youth to seek his couch with no agreeable anticipations of the morrow's events. Pleasant dreams, indeed!

## CHAPTER XIV.

In which Mr. Cromarty writes a Letter—and then a Note, which leads to a Meeting and a "Set-to" between two Men of the World.

"Dear Sir,

"I am confident you will not think it extraordinary my asking of you what your own innate sense of propriety would doubtless suggest to you at once, if you were aware of the consequences of your strange conduct. I allude, of course, to some satisfactory explanation of the affair of last night. I was too much moved then: I could not trust myself to speak on the subject, affecting as it does my own honour and the peace of mind of one most dear to me. A sleepless night has given me time for calm reflection.

"My own good will towards you, added to the mild and affectionate reasoning and remonstrances of my dear wife, whose very life hangs upon her children's happiness and well-being, has led me to take this conciliatory step.

"We—I mean Mrs. Cromarty and myself—have not been unobservant of the attentions you have paid our darling child; who is, of course, totally unaware of my making any communication of this nature to you. [He had been all the morning hard at work making rough copies of this very letter, and was now inditing it on the writing-case of his eldest daughter, who had been summoned early to a cabinet council there anent.]

"You must admit, my dear young friend, for so I must continue to call you, that not on this occasion only has

your behaviour been suggestive of—perhaps not altogether unpleasing—anticipations, although your mode of manifesting your partiality has been—shall I say, peculiar? I would scarcely have mentioned the circumstance of your having been found lately in the cabin of the steamer appropriated to the ladies, were it not that the scene of last night recalled it forcibly to my remembrance, and that it bears strongly on the present case. It *is* remarkable, you must confess, this coincidence of, I would say, corroborating combinations—

"Believe me, it was not necessary, this midnight plotting—Why have taken the pains to attire yourself in an unusual, although most becoming dress? What are the adventitious charms of dress, when the wearer is valued for himself alone? But it was well meant as a pretty compliment; it was a youthful and most pardonable fancy. Still, with the consciousness you must have of your hold on the affections of my darling child, why not have come openly to me? to us? My dear wife and myself can know no happiness greater than the ensuring that of our child; with open arms would we have welcomed you! I do not know that I ought to say it—my daughter, I think, would not have been wanting in warmth and cordiality in her reception of you.

"I will not say more now, awaiting as I do, with impatience and cordial welcome, your coming to us at your earliest convenience.

"You will see the propriety of keeping this communication private; your sense of delicacy will suggest this course to you. I shall be in my room all the morning.

"In the meantime, I remain, very sincerely yours,

"Kenneth Cromarty.

"Royal Hotel, No. 8, *Sunday Morning.*"

"There—I think that will do," said the Cromarty, when he had affixed to the envelope the impress of a large old-fashioned seal, and was restoring to his pocket the watch to which it was appended. The crest of the armorial shield was suggestive—viz., a fox proper passant for Cromarty, and a pigeon displayed vert, fastened by the leg to a maypole proper for "Popinjay."

"That must, I think, lead to the amiable adjustment of this very important affair. So now, girls, o breakfast."

This meal passed off somewhat heavily. Each one of the party seemed unwilling to enter upon the subject of the events of the past night, and the head of the family, after two or three ineffectual efforts to lead the conversation, relapsed into silence. His appetite did not appear in the least degree impaired by the sleepless night he is said to have passed. From the delicate Finnan haddie so coquettishly served up in its folded napkin, which forms usually the first dish of a Scotch breakfast, down to the amber marmalade which is always its last, he worked his way with great regularity and assiduity. After which, rising from his chair, and seating himself again at the writing-table, he wrote a few lines, slipped them, together with his visiting card, into an envelope, sealed it with the big seal, and then rang the bell.

"There's a gentleman in the house," he said to the London waiter who answered the summons, "of the name of Downey—Captain Downey—you know him?"

"Tallish gent, sir—middle age, bushy whiskers; dined with No. 3. Think I do, sir! go and inquire, sir—let you know directly, sir."

"That *is* the gentleman I mean. Is he up yet?"

"Boots has just took him his hot water, sir."

"Oh! not out of his room yet? well, never mind; take

this note to him at once with my compliments. Mr. Cromarty's compliments—do you hear? and ask if there is any answer to bring back. By-the-bye—a—is Mr. Fribbles, the gentleman who passed the evening with us, about yet?"

"Rather think not, sir. Wasn't up half an hour ago—landlord went to have it out with him about the row last night—found him asleep with a Glengarry bonnet on his head, and his feet on the pillar. Fast gent, sir, that—very. Hope the ladies wasn't disturbed, sir. All sorts of games he was up to—changed all the boots and shoes—knocked down the house porter, and busted into somebody's else's room, sir."

"Well, well, never mind them. Take the note to the Captain."

"D'rectly, sir!" and the waiter glided out of the room.

"What are you going to do now?" inquired Mrs. Cromarty of her husband; "you have said nothing about this—some new move?"

"My dear, it is desirable in every way that I should have an interview with this Captain Downey—perhaps I have my reasons—perhaps I have not—but—but—" added the Cromarty impressively, "I have an idea!"

"What, another, Papa?" asked his younger daughter, smiling. "Now really I do not admire this Captain Downey at all, and if you have any notion of proposing me to him, I must, with all deference, beg to decline the honour."

"My darling child!" he replied. "*Do*, I earnestly entreat of you—*do* be steady for once in your life. To relieve your mind, I assure you I have not the most remote intention of mixing up your name in this business I have in

view. There—and now, my dears, leave your Mama and me for a few seconds. I have something important to say to her."

"You recollect, my dear," continued he, as soon as the sisters had left the room, "the summer we passed at Baden Baden, when the Count von Witz-leben broke the bank, there was a good deal of talk about the losses at play of that young fellow who took such a fancy to our dear Arabella. I must say I think his guardian behaved infamously about it, positively taking him off by force the very day he was to have dined with us, and everything looking so promising, too. I want to know the name of the man who was mixed up in that gambling transaction in which young Spooney was fleeced at *écarté*, just before we got to Baden? The man I mean had bolted before we arrived, and I cannot—my memory is so bad—recall his name, although it was in everybody's mouth at the time. Something tells me it was this very Captain Downey, but I cannot be certain. His name is familiar to me. I think it *was* Downey."

"Indeed, Mr. Cromarty, I cannot help you. I remember but too well the sudden *enlèvement* of the young man you mention, and the very cool way in which people treated us, through your manœuvring. The least said about that, the better."

"Now, my dear, you do really take such an unpleasant view of things, and, I must say, make most unnecessarily disagreeable reflections. For whose happiness, I wonder, have I laboured for years? Not for my own; no one can accuse *me* of selfishness. What sacrifices have I not made? On whose account have I submitted to so many —I may say—privations? For whose sake, but for our children's? And have I laboured in vain? Have all my

plans been fruitless? Four of our daughters with comfortable—not to say handsome—establishments! I cannot get you to see things in their proper light; but I have my reward—I have my reward. I am now, my dear," continued he, when he had applied his handkerchief to his eyes and replaced it in his pocket, "going to have some conversation with this Captain Downey. If he be the man I cannot help thinking he is, why, I can have a hold upon him, and make him an ally instead of his being what I think he may be otherwise—a—in the way. And really, when I reflect that our dear Ada's happiness is at stake, I am prepared to undergo much—to undergo much."

"Stuff and nonsense, Cromarty——"

The opportune arrival of the waiter put an end to further discussion.

"Gent No. 1 sends his card, with compliments, to Mr. Cromarty—happy to wait upon him—time and place appointed," said the latter.

"Have you seen anything, waiter, of Mr. Fribbles yet?"

"No, sir, not exactly; but I 've heard of him. He 's been a-stamping and a-hollering like mad, with the bell broke down, and chambermaid 's been to his room and says he must be a strolling actor with all his playhouse dresses tumbled over the floor, swords and daggers with carum-gorum mountings, and bonnets and feathers, and no end of flashy plaids and tartans, and scarlet stockings and buckles in his shoes. 'No go' here. Theatres won't go down in Aberdeen—too pious. Master, sir, is just a-going up. Cuts up rough he does, sir,—uncommon put out about the row last night, sir—particularly being now the Sabbath morning."

"Take this letter to Mr. Fribbles—my compliments—no answer."

The "trysting" ground—or place of meeting appointed by the note to Captain Downey—was the coffee-room on the ground floor, and at the hour named the latter gentleman betook himself thither, curious to know what was the next move. He was soon joined by Cromarty. One or two of the tables next the window were occupied; and, after exchanging a rather courtly salutation, the two gentlemen retired to the other extremity of the room, interchanging, as they went, some remarks on the weather.

Each had an instinctive appreciation of the other at his full value, and it was obvious to each that he had to encounter a professor in his own walk of life. It needed little penetration to Downey to make him certain of the object of Cromarty's meeting him, and he foresaw it would require all his tact and worldly wisdom to act in such a way as not to commit himself. If Cromarty considered the Captain to stand in his way in the prosecution of his schemes, so did the latter gentleman apprehend that the influence of Cromarty over Fribbles might seriously interfere with the plans he had chalked out for a summer's enjoyment. Each wished to circumvent the other, and both put themselves on guard as two scientific pugilists might do after they had stepped in the ring. While the Captain put himself rather stiffly into attitude, there was a rollicking, jovial, careless, "Come on" sort of freedom in the bearing of his antagonist.

Oh! for the genius which guides the graphic pen of Our Special Correspondent in "Bell's Life," to chronicle, round by round, the history of this set-to between two master spirits, as he would that of a "mill" between the "Sussex Podger" and the "Norfolk Dumpling." We

have not that poetic verve, and are fain to fall back upon the poor resources of plain prosaic description, assuming to ourselves the credit of truthfulness in the detail.

"I take it kind,—very kind, indeed,—Captain Downey," said Cromarty, beginning the skirmishing, "to have accepted —a—my—a—overture for an interview."

The Captain bowed stiffly.

"I am aware," continued Cromarty, "of the interest you take in the young gentleman, Mr. Fribbles, who astonished us all last night by his very reprehensible proceedings. Of course you are not aware—how should you be?—of the interest I, too, have, in common with my family, in coming to an amicable adjustment of this very serious—*very* serious (I will say)—affair."

Another stiff inclination from the Captain, and the Cromarty was "thrown lightly against the ropes." He must try another attack.

"I understand," he went on, "from our young friend, that you are going with him and that very good-humoured, gentlemanly person, Mr. Brixey, to pass some time with them at Tommiebeg."

A cool bow of assent. The Cromarty continued.

"And a very friendly act, I must say, on your part—very. For I take it this is the first time these gentlemen have rented a moor, and the experience of an old hand like yourself will be of immense service—immense service to them."

"You will pardon my interrupting you, Mr. Cromarty, but I think this can hardly be the business which had induced you to seek an interview with me," observed the Captain, rather superciliously.

This was a "facer" from the Captain, and the Cromarty went down rather heavily in round the second

"Oh! no, no, no, no!" said the latter, recovering from his fall; "not at all. My object is to consult with you as to the best mode of arriving at a friendly adjustment of the unpleasant—a—complication in which your friend—our friend—must find himself."

"I really do not exactly see, Mr. Cromarty, what I can have to do with all this. I can have no particular interest in the matter, and I suppose Mr. Fribbles is old enough to act for himself. I know nothing of his intentions."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, Captain Downey; I have been led to infer that you might have been able to give some satisfactory explanation of his strange conduct."

"I am utterly at a loss," interrupted the Captain, in the high tone he had preserved throughout, "to imagine how you can have been induced to draw such an inference. I have not seen Mr. Fribbles since we all parted last night."

"Then—then indeed, my dear sir, I am quite in the wrong—quite," said Cromarty; "but," he added with significant emphasis, "buf, *if* I mistake not, the young gentleman went with you to your room *after* we all parted last night, and remained some time: it was but natural to assume that he might have given you some hint."

This was a hard stopper from the left hand, and the Captain got the worst of round the third.

"Oh! ah! true, I had forgotten," exclaimed the latter, rather staggered; "I furnished him with a light."

"And he said nothing at all," interrupted Cromarty. "Oh! *If*" (there was considerable stress laid upon this conjunction)—"*If* he said nothing to you, I have only to entreat your pardon for the liberty I took—a—in thinking it possible he might have made some communication to you. I trust you will excuse my having troubled you; I have really nothing more to say. By-the-bye," he con-

tinued, as they were walking side by side towards the door, "a young friend of mine made your acquaintance at Baden Baden in—let me see—yes, in the summer of '45." This was said slowly, and the effect of each word duly noted. It was satisfactory: the Captain stopped suddenly: they turned both of them back to the old "ring."

"Yes, poor Spooney!" the Cromarty went on, "he dropped a deal of money, he told me, that summer at *écarté*."

"And now I think of it," retorted the Captain, rather sharply, "after I left Baden that very summer, there was a curious story going of his having been cleverly entrapped into a promise of marriage with the ugly daughter of some noted old adventurer. Quite a romance it was. They say his guardian went out from England and carried him off just in time—I believe, on the very day fixed for the marriage."

The Captain planted this blow so truly that the "heavy weight" felt as if an aurora-borealis was flickering before his eyes. He was hardly "up to time."

"Captain Downey," he said after a pause, "you are a man of the world—so am I."

"And our friends are not," put in the Captain. "That is what you would say: am I right?"

"As a nail!" said the Cromarty, this time in his old cheery tone; and, drawing a chair for the Captain and taking one for himself, the two men of the world sat down opposite one another. The contest was at an end: it was a drawn battle.

"I suppose you have observed," said the Cromarty, "the attentions paid to my child by Mr. Fribbles."

"Why, yes," replied the other, with a somewhat uncourteous wink, "I see the game."

"No, no; don't be hard upon me. Of course, you know, if Mr. Fribbles was to put himself in communication with me—why——"

"Well, but I suppose he was in your room by appointment to meet Miss Cromarty, and throw himself at her feet, was he not?" asked the Captain, with a knowing smile, which was reflected on the face of his companion. "Why don't you bring him to book?"

"I have. I wrote to him at length on the subject, and I dare say he is now busy reading the letter."

"I thought you would. The game is in your hands now. He is very much taken, I think, with the younger Miss Cromarty."

"Pardon me, my dear sir, the elder—"

"Oh! I thought it was her sister. I see now."

"Yes, my elder daughter, though I say it, is a sensible, clever girl; will make an excellent wife; capital manager."

"Very odd I should have fancied it was the younger whom he preferred."

"Well, he has certainly, I admit it," said the Cromarty doubtfully, "he has an eccentric way of showing his devotion to Ada, my eldest. It is peculiar, but it *is* Ada who is to be his wife. That is—a—we must manage it somehow, for the poor young thing is really attached to him."

"Oh, evidently; of course it must be arranged." And a look of intelligence again passed between the two men of the world.

"You'll stay some time of course at Tommiebeg?" inquired the Cromarty.

"All the season. That is, if it is worth my while—if there is anything to be done."

"So I supposed; but you will come over for a week or two to my place. I can give you, later in the season,

some, I may say, really good low-ground shooting—a grouse or blackcock or two on the edge of the moor—and we 'll get a shot or two at a roe, if we are lucky."

And, with mutual protestations of good will to one another, the two men of the world shook hands and separated.

## CHAPTER XV.

A Word on Aberdeen—Ponto causes his Master to shock the Prejudices of the Natives—A Breakfast Conversation—Its Results.

THERE is nothing particularly lively in the aspect of the good and handsome city of Aberdeen at any time. The sad-coloured tone of the granite houses gives it a cheerless melancholy appearance, and would seem almost to have imparted a gloomy look to its inhabitants. If it looks cold and unhappy on a week day, on the Sunday it makes an especially disagreeable impression on the stranger.

So thought Brixey as he walked through the streets to his hotel. In vain he looked for anything resembling the cheerful and happy faces he had been accustomed to meet in London, on his way homewards from church. The rigid impress of the old Covenanter seemed to be stereotyped on the countenance of every one he met. In vain he looked about for one smiling face, *one* to assure him that pleasure and contentment might not be incompatible with the strict and conscientious observance of religious duties. The very children seemed to have put away their childishness for the nonce, and to have become staid and unnatural as they walked demurely in advance of their grave and silent parents.

Full of thought, and wondering within himself how such things could be, he reached the street in which the hotel was situated, and his attention was attracted to a sad in-

stance of an improvident waste of good food, altogether foreign to the habits of the people. A large dog was seated comfortably in the road with his two fore paws holding down a fine leg of mutton, which he was tearing and devouring with much voracity. No one of the passers-by paid any heed, or seemed to pay any, to this unusual sight; and Brixey himself would have gone by also, but for the sudden appearance of the porter of the hotel (whom he had seen in such sad plight the night before), rushing madly from the house, and, regardless of consequences, making a swoop at the mangled joint.

No one likes to be interrupted at his meals, and some dogs too are particularly jealous of any interference with their dinner. Thus was it with the animal in question; finding himself and his feelings rudely set at nought, he made a dash at the individual who sought to deprive him of his rights, and pinned him by the seat of his nether garments. In a moment Brixey was to the rescue, and had succeeded in beating off the dog when, horror of horrors! he was saluted by the porter with words expressive of intense disgust, bidding him "ca' aff his ain awfu', ramping, theivin' beast."

"Oh!" cried he, "the gigot! the bra' gigot! an' nae left o' it only just the bare banes," and he was making another dive at the mutton, now again in possession of the dog, when Brixey forcibly held him back.

"Steady, my man," said the unhappy owner to the angry porter, "leave him to me. I'll call him away. Here, boy! Hi! Ponto! Come along, old fellow! There's a good dog!"

Ponto cut him dead—ignored him altogether, and then Brixey, having exhausted all the endearing terms of which he was master without effect, began to whistle loudly.

Had a shell been thrown into the midst of the crowd which had now begun to assemble, it could hardly have produced a more appalling effect. It was the signal for a chorus of groans.

"Hoot, man, will ye profane the Sabbath wi' whustling?" said one.

"Heared ye ever the like o' that, whustling to his tyke on the Lord's day!" cried another of the bystanders.

"Eh! an' it 's just a profanation o' the Sabbath, ye auld doited ne'er-do-weel," observed a respectable old female to him.

"Really, my dear sir," said Brixey, addressing one of the most decent-looking of the crowd, "I am utterly at a loss to comprehend what all this means."

"What 's yer wull?" was the curt reply he got.

"I 'd have ye to observe," put in another, "that brawling and whustling in the streets the day is just a vain and a wicked ploy; an' it 's an unbecoming an' a maist pernicious example in a person of respectability, old enough to know right from wrang."

"Take hold of the dog yourself, then!" exclaimed poor Brixey, who, baited and worried as he was, was fast losing his temper. "Hang the dog!—that is—I am sorry I made use of the expression."

"Oh! an' ye may weel be that; ye may weel mak' lamentation, an' greet the noo o'er yer sinfu' cursing and profane swearing, and yer graceless whustling—ye maun be clean daft!"

Brixey could stand it no longer, so he walked off hastily to the hotel, pursued by the united reproaches of some score of serious, right-minded in-dwellers of Aberdeen. "If ever," he thought, in savage mood, as he threw himself into a chair, "if ever I become proprietor of a dog again—that 's all!

As to that brute—he is doomed to be my torment—I'll sell him. I'll give him away rather than keep him! I'll disown him!"

Night had not produced upon Fribbles its usually soothing effect: unrefreshed by his restless, broken slumbers, and oppressed by the weight of the scrape he had got into, he arose with pretty much the same feeling of despair and desponding as he might have felt had he been going to be hanged. Before he was half dressed the landlord had "waited upon him," and after a long exordium on the well-known respectability and high reputation of the house, of himself, and of all belonging to him, he had expressed his intention of making Fribbles responsible to the inmates of the hotel for his disturbance of their rest, telling him that many complaints had already been made to him on the subject, and that he had referred everybody to Fribbles for explanation. He accused him of having violently assaulted the porter, and of having knocked him down, and insinuated that the commonly received opinion was that no gentleman could be after any good prowling about by night in another gentleman's sitting-room, and that in the event of any article of property being not forthcoming, the police would not be long in fixing upon the thief. He hoped for his part, for the credit of the house, it might not so turn out, but he thought it his duty to say that he hoped Mr. Fribbles would lose no time in providing himself with another lodging.

So utterly crestfallen was the unfortunate subject of this tirade, that he had not a word to say. Nay, so abject was his state, so completely upset was he by his mishaps, that it is doubtful if he really comprehended whether it was burglary or murder, arson or bigamy, or all combined, of which he had been accused. In this condition the land-

lord, having eased his own mind by letting off the steam, left him to finish his toilet, which he did mechanically, and without any interest in a matter usually of infinite importance to him. He was by slow degrees bringing his intellect to bear upon his situation, when the waiter knocked at the door, and delivered to him the letter we looked over as Cromarty wrote it.

We must leave the reader to imagine the feelings of the recipient of this masterly composition. He read it once—twice—he read it again, to try and get at its full meaning: it was in vain his eyes ran over the sheet—he saw the writing, that was all. It was as though a haze had gathered round him. He was in an intellectual fog; but through this there loomed one bright spot—that was when he recalled the parting words of Captain Downey the night before. His offer of mediation seemed like a beacon to guide him in his mentally obfuscated condition, and to the Captain he resolved to refer the letter, before he took any steps to meet the injured Cromarty and his amiable family.

Captain Downey had established himself at the most comfortable table in the coffee-room, and was busied in the enjoyment of his breakfast. He was, on the whole, inclined to be pleased with his treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with Cromarty; for, although no protocols had been issued, no preliminaries signed, the league was as thoroughly understood and ratified by both parties as if the conditions and stipulations had been regularly discussed and agreed to. He felt as if he had in some sort the worst of it, but then he did not go in for so large a stake as his ally. He admired the address of the latter in having introduced that unpleasant affair of young Spooney, and he felt how completely that man would have checkmated him, but for that happy recollection of his of the matrimonial

scheme. It was quite a random shot at the Cromarty target: knowing him, by his own admission, to have been at Baden at the time, and deeming it singular he should have made no allusion to this well-known incident in the history of the rich young Spooney's career, the Captain's sagacity induced him to hazard the shot, and he hit the bull's-eye.

Downey was in every sense a practical man. It always became a matter of calculation, a rule-of-three sum, with him, what he should gain or what he should lose by any given line of action. He "first stated the question" by the rules of Bonnycastle or Walkinghame, and then worked it out. His first question in this case was, what would he gain by warning Fribbles against the machinations of Cromarty? Mighty little, since the latter gentleman would not fail to retaliate upon him by giving a version of that very "unlucky" story told against him, and only too truly, of his pigeoning the young *millionaire* at *écarté*. The second was, what would he profit by taking the opposite course? A pleasant season's grouse-shooting, with free quarters, expectations, and perquisites, at Tommiebeg; in perspective a visit to Cromarty, who after all was not a bad fellow; and, what was it to him whom Fribbles married? He should have got out of him all he expected to get before it came to that; it was no business of his, and it would be doing an unhandsome thing to come in the way.

The "answer," as it is called in summing, that he obtained after this calculation was to the effect that he had everything to gain and nothing to lose by adopting the line he had taken. Full of these pleasing reflections he was discussing his breakfast with increased relish, and was in the act of buttering another "wheat scon," when the pallid, careworn Fribbles made his appearance, and at his

solicitation joined him at his meal after ringing for fresh supplies.

A long conversation ensued, in the course of which the Captain never mentioned having seen Cromarty that morning—perhaps he forgot it. The letter was produced, and talked over in all its bearings.

"You have let yourself in rather of the earliest," observed the Captain, folding up the letter and restoring it to its owner. "You have lost no time; by-the-bye, which of the two young ladies is it?"

"Why, there now, dash it! That's exactly what I can't make out. I might, you know, have shown some little attentions to the pretty one, the youngest of them; but I declare I never said a word about engaging myself to either one or the other. I don't mean to say, you know—I may as well tell you—that if she would be a little more—I mean not quite so fond of—rather—laughing at a fellow, why a fellow might get very spooney upon her. But the worst of it is, it is the other, the old one, that 's always going on making up to me, and the old gent is always praising her up. You have no idea how she goes on. Dash it! I say, it 's a regular bore, and no mistake."

"Well, but," said the Captain, pouring himself out a cup of coffee, "the main thing to consider is, what to do about this letter. It is very evident Mr. Cromarty fancies you had made an appointment to meet his daughter last night——"

"Oh yes, I dare say!" interrupted Fribbles. "Why as I told you, I only tried on that new dress, just to see, you know, how it felt, and my candle burnt out. There I was, in the dark, and so I came down to find a light. Then that infernal porter——"

"Of course," replied the Captain, who had heard all this

before, "if you say it is so, of course such is the fact. But I put it to you—you are found in the middle of the night, in full-dress, in their sitting-room; appearances are sadly against you, and you will hardly persuade Mr. Cromarty of your innocence. I don't see how you are to get out of it without the most serious rupture with him; he may call you out, he may resort to legal measures,—take my word for it, no jury will believe you; and then remember what he says about his daughter. I am afraid you have gone too far to retreat."

"And I am to be married to a woman whether I like it or not!"

"It just comes to this, in my opinion. *I* don't see how you can deny having paid a good deal of attention to Miss Cromarty; that is, to one or other of them. Even I must bear my testimony to that. Then, you see, it is very awkward his dovetailing that affair of the steamer into this invasion of his domestic privacy. You must yourself admit he has grounds——"

"Oh! come now! you don't mean to say you think that has got anything to do with it, do you?" asked Fribbles, imploringly.

"Between ourselves, no! But then," answered the Captain, helping himself to a morsel of crisp oatcake, and buttering it carefully, "the difficulty will be to persuade a jury—I should say, the world, and especially those most interested—what your intentions really were. He is a gentlemanly fellow, Cromarty, and evidently does not want to quarrel with you. By-the-bye, I've been making some inquiries about him. He has got, I am told, a very nice estate in Morayshire—his family is a good one, and his wife's connections are particularly good. On my word, I do not see, all things considered, that your case is a very

hard one, or that you will be much to be pitied if you *do* make up to Miss Cromarty."

"But, dash it! There's two of them—that's the worst of it, and I do not want to have anything to do with the big one."

"Well, don't you think—take another cup of coffee—you are eating no breakfast—these rolls are excellent—don't you think you might temporise?"

"What is that? What is temporise?" inquired Fribbles, alarmed.

"I mean simply this: meet the old gentleman in a friendly way, and after saying a word or two of apology for disturbing him last night, accept the construction he puts upon your presence in his apartment. *I* tell you fairly, no one—much less the aggrieved party—will believe anything you may say of the actual facts."

"And so, then, I am to be married whether I will or no?"

"Upon my honour, *I* don't see your way out of it. In your place, I should 'accept the situation.' Why, you confess you *do* like one of the girls; and if he admits you into his family as avowedly wishing to become a member of it, you will make it all right in time. They are both, to my taste, very nice ladylike girls; and I think if either of them flattered me by showing me any preference, I should not be long in making up *my* mind."

"Then what am I to do? Had I not better go *first* to Mr. Brixey, who you know was my guardian till I came of age, and consult him?"

"You know best," said the Captain; "I can give no opinion; all I can say is that *I* should not think it necessary to take anybody into *my* counsels in a matter so completely involving my own happiness; besides it would look as if you were still in leading-strings."

"Am I to go straight to Mr. Cromarty, then? Do tell me what to say. By Jove, I don't half like facing him, I don't. And then, you know, if they are all there!"

"Make yourself easy about that," said the Captain, "for I saw the young ladies leave the house with their mother, as I came in to breakfast, on their way probably to church. Now is your time; but finish your breakfast first; try this marmalade, it is famous to 'top up' with."

"But tell us, what do you think *he* will say to me?"

"Say! Why it is clear he has taken such a liking to you that he will not be very formidable; just see if he does not receive you in the kindest manner, he has had his 'say' out in the letter. I have no doubt he will ask you to pay him a visit; I wish he would ask me; such partridge shooting as he has got, I hear, and no end of roe-deer and blackcock. I am going to have a weed now; what a bore there is no smoking room! You will find me somewhere about. By-the-bye, there's one of your dogs got loose,—it is ten to one he bolts."

"I forgot," Fribbles interrupted the Captain, as he was applying the light to his cigar. "The landlord here has been making a precious row this morning, and blowing me up sky-high. He gave me notice to quit."

"Never mind him, I will set that all straight while you are up with Mr. Cromarty. Good luck to you!"

And as the Captain lounged out at the front door to enjoy his Havana, Fribbles took a look at himself in the glass over the chimney, ran his fingers through his sandy locks, adjusted the set of his tie, and then full of care and misgivings he proceeded at a slow pace along the hall, mounted the staircase with faltering steps, and was soon closeted with his impatient father-in-law, that was to be.

It would trespass too much on our space to record the

paternal welcome with which he was greeted—how he was led on, he scarcely knew how, to declare his admiration of one—Papa Cromarty so adroitly dodged him that Fribbles found it impossible to declare which—of his daughters; and after accepting an invitation to a family dinner, he proceeded to the sitting-room just in time to find his friend Brixey seated there as we left him, and so overcome with his own misadventures of the morning that he had no heart to make any animadversion on Fribbles's proceedings of the night before; in fact, so distracted was he with his own thoughts that he hardly heard the explanation offered by the offender, who might have told him he was an engaged man without exciting any surprise or eliciting any remark from his dejected old friend.

Fribbles, however, resolved to keep this important affair to himself, being apprehensive of new complications; it would be time enough to make a confidant of Brixey by-and-bye, when things should be further advanced. He was, moreover, not altogether unconscious of the absurdity of his position, being actually engaged, and accepted by the parents, as the future husband of one of two sisters—for the life of him he could not say which it would prove to be. The influence, also, that Downey had established over him, his knowledge of the world and of things in general, had tended greatly to weaken the reliance on the judgment and opinions of his ex-guardian which he had never ceased hitherto to feel, and from which he had never attempted hitherto to emancipate himself.

Brixey expressed some surprise at the sudden intimacy which had sprung up between his young friend and Mr. Cromarty, but was far from entertaining any suspicion of the cause of it; he himself was not favourably impressed with the head of the Cromarty family, and he wondered

what Fribbles could find so attractive in him. Having known Fribbles from babyhood, and looked after him in boyhood, he could not yet bring himself to fancy the boy was grown up; and as to his thinking of marrying! The thing was ridiculous.

The Captain dined with Brixey, and they improved the intimacy afterwards through the pleasant medium of whiskey-toddy and cigars. In the course of the evening, Downey, referring to the kind offer of Brixey to be his banker till he should get a remittance from Inverness, took the opportunity of drawing a cheque upon him, at sight, for ten pounds, on the plea of having forgotten, stupidly, to provide two or three very necessary objects in London, and getting them in Aberdeen. There would be time enough to step over to Playfair's before the coach started in the morning. He was also to get a few sundries for the common stock. It had been settled at the conference the night before that all the commissariat stores should be ordered at Morel's in Inverness, and Snowie would be the best man for powder, shot, and shooting gear. They had enough to carry on the war till fresh supplies should be sent in.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Moral to be Drawn from the old Hackney Coach—A Look Back on the Turnpike Road—A Queer Traveller—A Legend of Hallowe'en—Burning the Ones.

We are not of the number of those who laud the excellence of the good old times. Doubtless there were in the days of our grandfathers very many valuable institutions, of which they were as proud in their generation as we, in our more advanced and more matured state of civilisation, can be of the privileges and advantages we enjoy in ours.

The Hackney Coach for instance! *There* was a valuable institution! How ancient, how respectable, how slow, but how sure! There was a dignity in a hackney coach which we look for in vain in an upstart modern cab. Talk of sermons in stones, indeed! There was a finer homily to be read in a hackney coach, with the armorial bearings of some noble family blazoned on its panels, with its rich faded lining and tarnished figured lace, with its well-stuffed and well-worn cushions. What a lesson it taught of the vicissitudes of life! Aye, and what time it afforded us to digest the moral as we "rode in the coach" to a five o'clock dinner-party in Baker Street.

We confess, honestly, to preferring the "go-ahead," hard-cushioned Hansom. We have a weakness, too, for Knickerbockers and loose raiment, once-round ties and Balmoral boots; and we look back (for alas! we must own to being able to do so, and take no pride nor pleasure in

the confession) to the tight, close-fitting garments of our youth with something of disgust. It makes us ill to think of the skeleton suit of our boyhood—sky-blue, with three rows of bright-silvered buttons. Faugh! we turn with loathing from the contemplation of that *page* in our history.

Where were we? Oh! we started in a hackney coach, which fully accounts for our being so tardy in arriving at one time-honoured and national institution, on which we would fain dilate with enthusiasm. Here, notwithstanding our professions of appreciation of the present age, we must become a *laudator temporis acti*,—we plead guilty to an unfading attachment to the well-appointed four-horse stage coach, which is fast becoming obsolete, and matter for history. We often catch ourselves stopping at Ackerman's shop window, and contemplating, with mingled feelings of regret and pleasure, those highly-coloured prints of the "Regulator," the "Rocket," the "Age," prints which will shortly be to be found only in the portfolios of the antiquary, and positively be laughed at by another generation, as rude and semi-barbarous contrivances of a by-gone age.

We loved a journey in the old coaching times. We gloried in the box seat, with old Weller sitting by our side in almost regal state; we listened with delight to his oft-told tales of the roadside; laughed at his witty sayings, and nodded an approval of his political opinions. How pleasant and bracing was the fresh air of the morning, as we rattled along the hard turnpike-road! How proud we felt, as every one we met stopped to admire the perfection of our turn-out! When pretty faces peeped out at all the windows, and when every one we passed, from the squire in the gig with the high-stepping mare, to the market gardener in his humble donkey-cart, gave evident tokens of admiration of our splendid team. It was beautiful to see

the well-matched horses step together, and perform their work as if they loved it. How skilfully old Weller holds them in hand! How cautiously he tacks at ugly corners; how cleverly he makes play at the end of the descent, and dashes at a gallop over the bridge in the bottom, to help us up the stiff hill on the other side before us.

And then, how cheerily sounds that time-honoured air, "Old Towler," on the key-bugle, which our guard performs, upstanding the while, in order to give it full blast as we bowl along, clattering over the pavement of a market-town. What excitement we cause! The cobbler drops his last, the tailor abandons his goose, and rushes to the door in time to give a nod of approbation as we go by, as though he were satisfied that all was right. Old Weller is coolly unbuckling the reins, as if he did not care for reins—he could drive without them. Four fresh horses are to be seen standing ready harnessed, with their cloths on, in front of the Red Lion hotel and posting-house. We pull up cleverly before the hostelrie. We have hardly time to get down and stretch our legs, when the new team is put to, and up we climb again. The coachman gives a comprehensive glance over the harness, bids Jem the ostler take up a hole somewhere, and while he is gathering up the reins, inquires of him "how the old chestnut is a going on?" He is again in his seat, he folds the apron comfortably over his legs, gives the word to take the cloths off, and away we rattle again, not without some unpleasant misgivings on our part that that near leader is likely to kick over the traces.

The old stage coach will, as we have said, soon belong solely to the past. In some remote parts of the country, where railroads have not yet penetrated, they exist yet—degenerate, most of them, and for the most part reduced to

two or three horse power. At the period of our tale the railroad from Aberdeen to Inverness was only talked about, and the service of the road was performed by two or three four-horse coaches, which still retained something of the old style of thing. It was on the outside of one of these our friends had booked themselves as far as Morayburgh. The Captain occupied the box seat (of course he did—it was the best); he had cautiously offered it to Brixey, having previously explained to him how awkward he might find it on holding the reins, in the event of the coachman alighting, and convinced him that it might not be unattended with danger on a wild Highland road. Brixey had therefore declined the honour, and was now seated behind the Captain; and Fribbles, in order to ensure more room for his length of limb, had taken possession of the outside seat on the opposite side, leaving the intermediate places to be filled by two other travellers. The one next him was a shrewd-looking comfortable little man, with a pleasant rosy face and good-humoured expression. Brixey's neighbour was a long cadaverous figure, with a hard sharp-cut cast of feature; he was muffled in a capacious brown sort of cloak of outlandish fashion, curiously braided, and having a pointed hood behind; a rich silk shawl of eastern pattern, was folded round his throat, and a crimson tarboosh, or Fez cap, with heavy black tassel hanging down behind, covered his head. He sat bolt upright; his two long thin hands, encased in a pair of well-worn tan leather gloves, resting crosswise on the top of the handle of a monstrous red cotton umbrella.

Fribbles, absorbed with his own delicious reverie, did not seem disposed to enter into conversation; and after a curt reply to one or two observations from the little man next him, he shut himself up in silence. The delightful

sense of meeting the fresh morning air had a most satisfactory effect on Brixey; the cloud which had at first settled on his naturally cheerful temperament was soon blown away; his spirits rose in proportion as he left Aberdeen and its painful reminiscences further behind. Captain Downey was engaged in "horsey" talk with the coachman, so Brixey, turning to his neighbour, remarked, by way of beginning the conversation, that they were lucky in having a fine day for their journey, and that there was every appearance of its lasting

"Seventy-two!" replied his neighbour.

"I beg your pardon," said Brixey; "I observed that it was a fine day."

"Seventy-three!" was the strange answer.

"Excuse me," continued Brixey, beginning to feel rather uncomfortable, for he fancied the man might not be in his right mind. A moment's consideration, however, suggested to him what was more likely, that he might be hard of hearing, and giving utterance to this thought in a low voice, he said, in a much louder tone than he had hitherto used, "It is a fine morning!"

"I am not hard of hearing; and that makes seventy-four!" replied his strange fellow-traveller.

"What—what makes seventy-four?" inquired the now really terrified Brixey.

"Seventy-four times since my return to this country, only four days ago—seventy-four times has a remark been made to me about the weather. I've noted them all—giving an average of eighteen or nineteen times a day. A mere waste of words, sir!"

"Ah! I see," returned Brixey, "but you are rather hard upon us."

"Not so, sir. Why throw away one's breath in vulgar truisms?"

"To confess the honest truth," answered Brixey, "my observation on the weather was intended more as a lead to conversation."

"An' that's the verra words," said Fribbles's neighbour, "that the ghaist of auld Professor Mucklewham of St. Andrews remarked to Saunders M'Crumbie, the supervisor of excise, at Hallowe'en, when he was mixing his ninth tumbler of toddy, waitin' for the comin' back of his nephew, Robbie Christieson, the doctor, who had been sent for to the Manse, the meenister's leddie being taken rather sudden. 'He'll be hame just noo,' said Saunders to himself, looking over at his empty chair opposite, 'an' I shuld'na like to *begin* drinkin' again with him, so I may as weel not leave it off the noo. It's verra mischancit folk being taken wi' pines an' sickness at such unconscionable hours,' he continued, as he was stirring up the new brew; 'an' the meenister's, too, a weel-conducted regular family, I should na' hae thocht it,' and he filled his glass with the smoking liquid with a wooden toddy-ladle, from the tumbler; 'but it's a fac, I no like drinking by mysel.'

"'An' here's to our better acquaintance, Saunders M'Crumbie,' said a rollicking voice, as the tumbler was suddenly snatched from under his very nose, and applied to the lips of a stout, burly individual who was now seated in Robbie Christieson's chair, with his feet on the hearth-stone.

"Saunders looked aghast as the tumbler was set down empty; he stared at the new-comer, who stared at him in return; and so they continued starin' at one another for some time. It was a strange face that Saunders's gaze encountered. A red-hot, glowing nose of enormous proportions, set rather awry between two cheeks of ashy paleness, supported on its bridge a pair of huge spectacles of green glass, through which shot the intensely bright flash

of a pair of large eyes; a black cotton night-cap was jauntily set on one side of his head, leaving the tassel to play on his left ear; the body was attired in a faded black coat of ancient cut, tightly buttoned over the chest, bringing out in relief the two long ends of a white cravat, which hung down nearly to his waist; a pair of ancient silk breeches, the baggy knees of which, polished with wear, shone brightly in the fire-light; a pair of grey worsted hose, and shoes with buckles, covered the lower portion of this queer intruder.

"Now Saunders M'Crumbie was not a man to be bullied; at the same time his natural sense of politeness, and of the hospitable regard due to a stranger and a guest, restrained him; so he quietly remarked—'I'm thinking its no that ceevil o' ye, the helpin' yoursel to anither gentleman's toddy, wi' a tumbler handy and a toddy-ladle, an' the sperits, an' the sugar, an' a', an' the het water on the fire——'

"'Saunders! dinna fash yoursel; it was just intended, man, as a beginin' o' a friendly crack betwixt us—just a lead o' conversation,' replied the strange visitor."

Here the little man, something after the fashion of the Neapolitan *improvisatore*, stopt short in the story.

"Well! and what then?" asked Brixey, much interested.

"What then?—why, just what I was saying," replied the other—"the remark of Saunders M'Crumbie's pleasant acquaintance, was praceesely the same that yours was but now. 'It was just an opening o' conversation.'"

"But what was the end of the story?" inquired Brixey; "I should like to know how the conversation went on and what happened afterwards."

"That's soon told," the other resumed. "Of course Saunders invited the stranger to help himself, and the bottle being now empty, he was obliged to go to the press

to fetch another, and it is wonderful how friendly they got. The stranger imparted to Saunders—in strict confidence—to go no further—that he was no other than Archie Mucklewham, once a well-known Professor of Cockeology in the university of St. Andrews; that he died, and consequently resigned his professorship, just forty-eight years ago that very evening; that he was taking a turn about the place to visit his old haunts, and see how things were speeding, when, attracted by the perfume of real 'Farintosh,' he had looked into the house, which was puir Lucky Gledstane's, and where he had lodged twenty-two years; 'an' in that chammer,' he said, pointing to a door in the room, 'I was streaked out. They said I died o' delirium tremens, just a new fangled, unkenned sickness in thae days; but,' continued he, 'it 's just nae possible for me to give up sperits a' thegither in my new line of life. An' this will be the real peat reek you've got here—but you're no takin' your liquor freely,' pushing the bottle over to Saunders, who had arrived at his seventeenth tumbler, and was beginning to find his hand a trifle unsteady, as well as to be conscious of a slight impediment in his speech: in other respects he was right enough.

"'Just brew for yoursel, man! I'll be bail there'll be mair to be found where ye took this frae. Said I not so?' exclaimed the Professor, rising and looking into the press. 'Ane—twa—sax brithers o' the same litter, an' they'll be gude company, too,' he continued as he ranged the six bottles on the table, 'they'll be mair ready to hand here.'

"Saunders M'Crumbie's intellects were as clear, he said, as when he got up in the morning. He thought it a cool proceeding of his uninvited acquaintance making himself so free, and taking upon himself to do the honours of the house; but somehow his tongue declined obeying orders,

and finding it impossible to get out a word, sideways even, he thought the best thing he could do was to take it easy, and watch matters.

"Powers! how the Professor did imbibe! tumbler after tumbler, the water reeking, boiling hot from the kettle, which he had replenished twice from the pump in the yard. As to drinking fair with him, it was absurd to think of it; so Saunders, determining to keep well within bounds, just went on ladling out his modicum from the tumbler, which never seemed to get lower, and leaning back occasionally in his chair, he stared at his extraordinary guest, who glowered at him in return.

"'He can't go on drinking like this much longer!' thought Saunders, tossing off another glass.

"'Verra slow wark, this!' exclaimed the Professor, whose nose now glowed like a burning coal on his pale face. 'See here, man; I'll tell ye what we'll do.' Saunders could not reply; his feelings were too many for him. He saw the Professor slowly uncork a fresh bottle, and then apply it to his lips; he saw him tip it gradually, and heard the guggling sound as the air rushed in to replace the fluid in the bottle, which, after a long breath, he set down empty.

"'And noo for the het water!' said he, taking the hissing kettle off the fire, inserting the spout in his mouth, and sucking at it for some time with apparently pleasurable feelings.

"'And noo for mixin' the twa! Come on!' saying which words, he jumped up, seized the astounded Saunders M'Crumbie by the waist, and whirled him round and round the room, till he got so giddy that he fell down all of a heap, on which the Professor vanished in a blue flame from the room.

"He was found senseless on the floor, by his nephew,

Robbie Christieson, who came in just after twelve o'clock, and who averred to observing a strong smell of *spirits* in the room. When roused from his torpor, Saunders was found quite unable to articulate a word. He told the tale afterwards as I have retailed it to you. It could hardly have been strictly true, because only two bottles were found empty. The sugar was all gone, and the kettle was on the fire with its bottom burnt out. He stuck out, however, manfully for his version of it, in spite of the doubts and shakings of the head of the townsfolk. Certain it is, that once every year he takes the temperance pledge (to be binding for one night only), and that is for Hallowe'en."

Just as the little man finished this interesting legend, the attention of the travellers was attracted to large masses of smoke rolling over the hill-side at some distance from the road.

"There's a fire, surely!" cried Brixey; "a whole village, I should think!"

"They're just burning the whuns," replied his neighbour, coolly.

"Burning the ones! Bless me! You don't say so! What ones are they burning?" asked Brixey, much excited.

"Eh! just the whuns. W-h-i-n—whun. Ye'll know what that is."

Here the Captain turned round to explain that the shepherds were burning the gorse on the hill-side, which had got weak, and rank, and unfit for food for the sheep. He told them that the young shoots from the old plants afforded an excellent bite the following year.

"But what prevents the fire spreading?" inquired Brixey.

"They choose an opportunity," put in the little man,

"when the wind is in the right airt—when it blows right away to the part to be burned—and then a number of the neighbours assemble, armed with boughs of fir, or big rods of broom, to beat out the fire at the edges, and prevent it spreading beyond the line they mean it to follow."

"And does the fire never get ahead of them?"

"Not often. Sometimes, however, a whole hill is burnt clean off—not a twig of heather left in the line of fire. It usually goes right on end, spreading sometimes over a wide space, and sometimes dividing itself into narrow strips, like, leaving the heather on either side."

"I suppose," said Brixey, "all the game has notice to quit."

"Oh! the grouse is scared fine. But I mind me of the burning on a moor on Spey side—some said it was done on purpose—the fire made two or three wide burnings right over the hill, and destroyed the greater part of a fine young fir plantation in its road. The gentlemen who rented the shootings from year to year gave them up. A new party took it next season, and more grouse was killed upon the ground that year than had ever been known before. The reason was this: there was good ground and well looked after on both marches, and the birds came from either side to feed on the young heather. But here we are; I don't know how you gentlemen feel, but I feel greatly apetized."

The coach stopped here for breakfast, and those who have had a twenty-mile drive, on a fine, sharp, bracing morning, across Aberdeenshire, can understand how our travellers enjoyed the meal. We entertain, ourselves, a grateful recollection of a standard dish here—a *roasted* side of bacon—the only time we ever met with it; and on our veracity, we vouch for its excellence, though it be not even named in the instructive work of Mrs. Glasse, nor in the more scientific volume of the immortal Soyer.

## CHAPTER XVII.

A Tale of Timbuctoo—Organic Changes—Ruminations of Fribbles—The Inn Don at Fochabers—A Big Fish—Doubts respecting it.

"And it's lucky we are in the weather the day," observed the talkative little man, as he settled himself in his seat on the coach after breakfast.

"That makes seventy-five," said Brixey cheerily to his neighbour, who was puffing away vigorously at a big meerschaum pipe. "Come, you must admit that my remark on the weather, truism or not, led to a very pleasant talk this morning. You were saying, I think, you were just come from abroad?"

"Four days ago." (puff, puff.)

"May I ask where you came from?"

"Timbuctoo." (puff.)

"Bless me!" exclaimed Brixey, much interested. "That is a long journey—is it not?"

"Rather," replied his neighbour, who went on smoking with great gravity.

"Were you long in that country, pray?"

"Two years, five months, and thirteen days." (puff, puff.)

"Bad travelling, sir, I take it in those parts!" said the little man, with an inquiring look. "No coaches! no railroads!"

"None." (puff, puff, puff.)

"And, if it's not an impertinent question to ask," pursued the other, "what was it that sent ye there?"

"Barrel organs." (puff, puff.)

"Barrel organs!" exclaimed Brixey, amazed.

"Barrel organs," returned the stranger dryly, as he applied to the bowl of his pipe, by way of tobacco-stopper, the iron-mounted handle of a rudely-fashioned knife or dagger, in a red leather sheath.

"Singular—very," said Brixey.

"Not so much so as you suppose—a barrel organ sent me back too!" (puff.)

"From Timbuctoo?"

"From Timbuctoo." (puff.)

"But this is indeed very remarkable—very remarkable, indeed. If it would not be asking too much, I should like to know how this came about."

"If you wish to know, you shall (puff, puff)—my pipe is nearly out. Smoking (puff) and story-telling (puff) don't do together—spoils both (puff, puff). Nothing very extraordinary, I tell you beforehand (puff). I thought so," he continued, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and put it into a wide breast-pocket. "Can't do two things at once. Well, I was driven abroad first from the circumstance of my taking, many years ago, a house on lease in a retired street in London. I went there for quiet, and got on very comfortably for a fortnight, and then began my troubles. London was suddenly invaded by legions of Italian and Savoyard vagrants, all armed with barrel organs, and my street, being quiet, was chosen as the head-quarters of the staff. I bore it patiently for nearly thirty-six hours, and then I tried to expel them. The more I remonstrated, the more troublesome they got. I applied to the policeman, whose presence kept them at bay, but as soon as he turned

the corner, they reappeared and began grinding again. I have counted seven of these villains making horrid discord within twenty yards of my door. I applied to the magistrates—no use—they had no power. I got rid of my lease, and tried the country. No sooner was I established anywhere than they seemed to ferret me out by instinct. I went into a remote part of Wales. They followed me directly. I rushed abroad. I got farther and farther, and at last found myself in Egypt. The very first day, sir, I was at Cairo, I was smoking a quiet cheroot on the platform before the door of Shepheard's hotel, and I'll be—hanged—if there was'nt, in less than five minutes, a beastly Italian grinding 'Home, sweet home,' under my very nose.

"I went up the Nile, but the dread of organic disturbance drove me on, on, farther a-field. I hated the idea of returning to civilisation and barrel-organs, so I joined a caravan at the second cataract going into the interior, and got at last to Kartoum. It was a quiet place enough, but the dread I had of the hated nuisance following me made me unhappy, and striking up an intimacy with an elderly slave-dealing land pirate I accompanied him to Timbuctoo. Here I conceived I had got to the end of all things, and was happy. I bought a small estate, and actually tried to introduce an improved system of agriculture, rotation crops and so on. Perhaps you are not aware that the principal articles of produce there are castor oil, gum Arabic, pumpkins, senna, ostrich feathers, doura wheat, niggers, and elephants' tusks. I had my little drawbacks; the prejudices of the rural population there are nearly as strong as those of the chawbacon class in England, and I failed in establishing a system of poor-law unions, savings' banks, and county lunatic asylums, entirely through the pig-headedness and

jealousy of the neighbouring gentry. However I got on very well, and had quite got rid of my nervous apprehensions, when one day hearing the king was taken ill, I sent a message to him that I would undertake to cure him of his malady. A capital chance I thought it of obtaining a good footing in the country.

"The Secretary of State for the Home Department waited upon me in person with a numerous escort of niggers, and a led horse for me, the trappings of which were richly ornamented with cooly shells, ostrich feathers, hazel nuts, bits of looking-glass, and crocodiles' teeth. I rode to the palace amid the acclamations of the people. I was introduced to his majesty, whom I found doubled up with a stomach-ache, and lying on the floor. His malady I soon ascertained to have been caused by his indulging too freely at breakfast in rhinoceros steak and raw pumpkin. He was surrounded by all the court, and every one was anxiously watching me to see how I proceeded.

"I had had the precaution to carry with me a few grains of calomel and Dover's powders, which I had put up in a number of papers of different colours, of course for effect.

"Having desired the royal patient to be placed upon a carpet in the middle of the room, I traced round it with a lump of chalk I had taken with me on purpose a wide circle, bidding the courtiers stand on the outside the line, and repeating the while, at intervals and with emphasis, the 'Propria quæ maribus,' as far as I recollected it. Then placing myself in front of his majesty (within the magic circle of course), I began slowly to unfold the different envelopes, giving one to each of the attendants to hold above his head,—I forgot to say I was obliged to have recourse to some choice quotations now from the 'As in præsenti.'

"Before opening the last paper I performed a variety of extempore gesticulations, which seemed greatly to impress the minds of the spectators. At last, after turning and making a low bow to each of the four corners of the room, I gradually opened the paper containing the medicine, and then reciting with increased energy the cabalistic words,

Ton dapameibomenos poluphloisboio thalasses !

I emptied the powder on the tongue of the patient together with a lump of sugar, and bid him shut his mouth and swallow the dose.

"Having duly explained to the Home Secretary the probable effects of the medicine, I was making my salaam, when the Lord High Treasurer was ordered to fill my mouth with coloured glass beads, some of which by the way I could not help swallowing, and they nearly choked me. On leaving the presence I was escorted back in the same state, and with the same retinue as before to my dwelling.

"I waited with some anxiety till the afternoon of the following day, when I was again summoned to the palace. I found the king in high spirits, and was given to understand that a great treat had been prepared in my honour. There was a grand collation spread out, at which I was invited to sit on the right hand of royalty. I will not tell you the abomination I was obliged to swallow, but there was no evading it as his sable majesty himself thrust the nasty morsels into my mouth with his dirty fingers.

"The repast over, some decent coffee was served in little filagree cups, and a lighted pipe was handed to me by the ugliest of female slaves. I was then told by his majesty to prepare for a surprise.

"Now there was a greasy stained yellow-silk curtain hanging across the room, and from the anxious looks of the

court in that direction I felt tolerably sure that *the* wonder was concealed behind it. I waited impatiently—there was a dead silence; the eyes of the king and all the court were fixed upon me; his majesty suddenly clapped his hands.

"Conceive, gentlemen, my horror, my disgust, at hearing the most melancholy of barrel-organs begin grinding 'Partant pour la Syrie.' Every note jarred upon the tympanum of my ear; I nearly fainted under the infliction, and my emotions were all set down to the score of intense delight and ineffable satisfaction. How I got home I know not, but my servant Mumbo Jum told me my behaviour had given the greatest possible satisfaction to the monarch.

"My torments were not over yet; day after day I was sent for to the palace, and the wretched organ was made to grind for my amusement. Of course this could not last, I should have sunk under it, so I determined to leave the capital. But this was not so easy, for his majesty took such pleasure in my society, and in seeing my strange delight at his miracle of miracles, the barrel-organ, that he would not hear of my departure. This was flattering, but horrible. It would tire you to tell you what dangers and difficulties I had to go through in effecting my escape; but I found my way at last to the coast of Guinea, where I got a passage in a trader to Hamburg, and taking the steamer thence I arrived at Hull four days ago."

"And where may I ask, are ye for now?" inquired the little man.

"Foula Island."

"An' where 's yon island?"

"In the Atlantic—no barrel-organs there," said the traveller with evident satisfaction.

In the meantime, while Brixey had been interested and amused with the stories he had heard, as well as charmed

with the novelty of the scenery through which they were passing, and with the excitement of the mode of travelling, Fribbles had paid no heed to what was going on round him. He had been roused from his contemplative mood by the episode of breakfast, but had relapsed again into his former gloomy state of mind, and was occupied in "chewing the cud," or, as the Frenchman called it, "shewing the code," of sweet and bitter fancy.

An uncomfortable doubt brooded over him, which no sort of reasoning could entirely dispel. Perhaps this is scarcely the proper way to put it, because in fact the more he debated the matter over and over within himself, the doubt became more and more faint, and by gradual transition assumed the shape of certainty. Had he been made a fool of or not? Unwillingly he owned that appearances were rather in favour of coming to the affirmative conclusion.

What was the real state of the case? He was actually under promise of marriage to somebody—there was no getting over this; and it was equally true that he had never intended to engage himself to anybody—he had not even his own consent to it. However there he was, committed to old Cromarty, he was fairly "nailed"; and then he put the question to himself, how it had come to pass? Had he ever said or done anything prior to the arrival at Aberdeen to compromise himself? He would swear he had not. True he had been a good deal taken with the younger Miss Cromarty, but then she was so pretty, so fascinating, and he might without intending it have allowed this preference to be observed. But what did that amount to? Perhaps at tea that evening he had betrayed himself? Impossible. And then again it was the elder of the young ladies who always seemed to give him the most encouragement; sh

positively *did* seem to be a good deal struck with him. Well, he could not help that, it was her own fault (here a self-satisfied smile played, unconsciously to himself, for an instant over his face). If people choose to fall in love with him, why they must take the consequences.

Then there was that wretched midnight adventure at Aberdeen. How everything seemed to combine against him! Even his unlucky mistake on board the steamer! That, too, absurd as it might be, was brought against him. But, did Mr. Cromarty in his heart of hearts believe in the construction it had pleased him to put upon his proceedings? Did he really consider these two strange misadventures as being corroborative proof of a wild attachment to his daughter? Or—dreadful idea!—had he ingeniously turned them to account, and was his letter a clever piece of humbug? (Then came self-love again to the rescue.) He (Fribbles) was hardly the sort of fellow Mr. Cromarty would "try it on" with. The old gentleman knew better than that. He would hardly have the impudence to try such a dodge upon him! Now if it had been a slow fellow, without any knowledge of the world, it might have done; but no one was likely to attempt to come over a fellow that was "wide awake"—that had "cut his eye teeth." So at least Fribbles mentally consoled himself, and, pursuing this train of thought, thus ruminated:

Well then, if Cromarty were deceived himself—if he really fancied there was an attachment—if he was desirous of making him one of his family—it was but natural he should like to clear it all up, and his letter was all "on the square." But how does it happen that he always contrives "to choke him off" at the very moment when he is going to declare *which* of the daughters was the chosen

one? Why does he always somehow or other (and poor Fribbles was sorely puzzled to discover how) contrive to make it understood that it was the elder one? Why is he always praising Ada to him, and talking of Minna as his little girl—his child—just as if she was only a baby? He had been welcomed yesterday, and treated completely as one of the family (he did not know it—but he had been flattered and talked into fancying himself an object of affection to every member of it), he had pledged himself to pay a visit at Rogie, early in September; and all this had taken place unknown to his old friend and adviser, Brixey, without whose sanction he had never in all his life taken any step of importance. He was bewildered—he was in a labyrinth—he was tossed about in an open boat in mid-ocean—he was floundering about in a bog—he was lost in the desert. A vague impression, derived from a mingled web of these desponding similes, now clouded the bewildered mind of poor Fribbles.

As the coach drove up to the inn at Fochabers, there were two or three gentlemen standing at the door, on the look-out for its arrival, either expecting parcels or acquaintances, or perhaps merely from curiosity; and it happened that just at this moment a stout hale-looking elderly man, in a suit of shepherd's plaid, came up, followed by a servant carrying his fishing-rod and clip, and a gillie with a heavy well filled bag thrown over his shoulder.

"Well, my lord, what's the bag to-day?" inquired one of the party.

"Lift it yourself, man," replied the new comer, taking the bag from the bearer and handing it to his friend, "and tell us the weight if you can. There are only two, a grilse of four or five pounds, and a salmon. It was not worth while sending the grilse to the fish-house, and I was

determined to keep the salmon for our dinner. Well, what do you make it?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed the other, lifting the bag with both hands, "he's a big fish—he's a good twenty pounds, if he's an ounce."

"Aye," put in the gillie, "an' ye may pit anither sax pund till it; forbye the grulse, which is no that bad." So saying he turned out first a grilse of some five pounds weight, and then a noble salmon.

"A splendid fish!" "A magnificent fellow!" "The best fish I've seen this year!" Each of the bystanders expressed his admiration as they gathered round it.

"Where did you get him?" asked one of them.

"Just below the bridge, you know the cast," replied the fisher; "he came short at me twice, so I gave him ten minutes, and changed my fly for one of the same pattern exactly, only a size or two smaller. He took it the first throw, and gave me a good five-and-thirty minutes' work. Clean run, you see, with the louse on."

"Oh! dash it!" cried Fribbles, who with most of the passengers had joined the group (Fribbles was startled out of his apathy); "why, you don't mean to say, you know, that fish was caught with a fishing-rod! It ain't possible."

This sally of his was received with a look of surprise, and something of contempt, by all but the individual who had killed the fish.

"I beg your pardon," he said, good-humouredly, "you will see I have left the fly in his mouth. By-the-bye, Donald, don't forget to cut it out carefully presently," and he stooped to show the hook still fast in the upper lip of the fish. The fly, rude in make, having a long thin body of black floss silk, ribbed with narrow flat silver tinsel, with a long tender brownish-speckled hackle running up it, and a

modest brown wing of turkey feather, was tied on single gut.

"Oh! I say, you know," exclaimed Fribbles again, after examining the fly with wondering eyes, and turning from one to another of the party to see if he could trace on their faces anything like the shadow of a joke, "why that bit of gut wouldn't lift up that small fish there without breaking."

"Hoot, man!" said the gillie, with a look expressive of intense disgust, "are ye daft? Are ye thinkin' my lord hefted the fush with the heuk richt up to the tap o' the brig like a wee bit finnock! Eh! gentlemen, he was killed fine; and do ye mind, my lord, the uncanny beastie how he flitted awa' an' me wi' the clup weel nigh intil him! Eh! it's a braw fush, an' clean frae the sea."

"Well, if ever!" cried Fribbles, completely flabbergasted —but he had no time for any further remarks, for the horses being by this time put to, the passengers quickly took their places, with the exception of Fribbles's little neighbour, who did not go on further, and whose seat was taken by a well, but quietly, dressed man of middle age. The Captain had disappeared suddenly from the scene all this time. He was now got up quietly on the outer side, and kept his face studiously turned away from the inn, keeping it so fixed till they were rattling over the handsome bridge of Fochabers. It is not unlikely he might have discovered some discreditable acquaintance among the persons before the inn door, and did not wish to know him.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

A Dinner Party at the North Cape—Fly-fishing in India—Novel mode of lighting a Cheroot—Wild Sports of Siberia—Arrival at Morayburgh —Mr. Evan M'Snail.

"AFTER all," said the stranger, who seemed so well up in the Spey fishing, "after all, it is all a delusion and a snare, this fishing in Scotland. You are cramped and bullied everywhere; you must either rent some water at a fabulous price or poach. It is exactly the same in Norway, Why, sir," he continued, addressing himself to his neighbour, the African traveller, "I went last year to a pretty stream up at the North Cape, where I used formerly to get some capital fishing, and—would you believe it?—I found a Cheapside haberdasher, Bawker and Co., flogging the water. It was too much."

"What did you do?" inquired the other, still puffing away at his big meerschaum.

"Do? Turned back, of course."

"You were wrong."

"Why?"

"Well, I will tell you what I did."

"Where?"

"There, at the North Cape, the very river you speak of. *I* found the firm established there. I stayed there three weeks. They bolted the very day I arrived. Are you a smoker?"

"Yes, but the wind spoils one's cigar."

"Will you have a pipe?" asked the traveller, producing another huge meerschaum from his ample pocket. "Stay, let me fill it," saying which he dived into another pocket, and bringing out a handful of choice Eastern tobacco, filled the pipe artistically.

"But how did you contrive to get rid of Bawker and Co.?" asked the new comer, when he had started his pipe.

"The simplest thing in the world. There happened, luckily for me, to be in the neighbourhood a party of Esquimaux, particular friends of mine (I had boarded and lodged with them a whole summer when after bears). I fraternised amicably with Bawker and Co., asked them to dinner, and invited my friends to meet them; there were thirteen of them, counting the squaws; jolly little fellows the men were. Now, as it was inconvenient to me, with my small establishment, to cook for so many, I got my lady friends to superintend the arrangements of the culinary department.

"You should have seen Bawker and Co.'s faces when the dinner was served up. The dishes were certainly a trifle greasy, and a strongish dash of tallow, with a soupçon of rancid train oil, pervaded the side dishes. The *pièce de résistance* was a barbacued seal, flanked by a haunch of raw reindeer.

"I had told Bawker and Co. beforehand that these pleasant little friends of mine were lords of the soil, and would expect, of course, to be treated with consideration; so they sat it out; but you should have seen how deadly pale they got.

"When they rose to go away, I hinted to Bawker and Co. that they would do well to invite my little friends to dinner the next day, and that we could arrange between us

to entertain them on alternate days as long as they remained near us. Everybody did so, and they would expect the compliment to be paid them.

"Bawker and Co. shut up shop—gave up business; and without so much as putting up bills with 'Alarming sacrifice' or 'Selling off considerably under prime cost,' they fairly bolted, and I got a very pretty three weeks' fishing."

"Bawker and Co. were in fact sold themselves," said the last comer.

"A bargain," replied the other.

If Brixey had thought the drive from Aberdeen to Fochabers enjoyable, much more was he inclined to be delighted with the scenery from the latter place to Morayburgh. The country seemed to have changed its character altogether. Rich healthy-looking crops of wheat and barley waved by the road-side, instead of thin sickly patches of oats and bear; and in situations where a few miles back a desolate shealing might have been looked for, the well-built comfortable homestead, sheltered from the east by its trim plantation of fir and beech, peeped pleasantly out from the sunny dingle.

This change is due not only to the improved nature of the soil, but to the beneficial effect of climate as well. There are few parts of England even where the air is drier and more salubrious than along the shores of the Moray Frith, especially in the district lying between the Spey and the Findhorn; and our travellers were fain to remark, as they passed through the pretty cheerful town of Elgin, that these advantages were well appreciated. In the neighbourhood of no provincial town of the same pretensions in the south are to be seen so many "suburban" (as the English auctioneer would call them), or (in Scotch parlance) "self-

contained," residences, bespeaking an unusual number of well-to-do families, settlers in this charming spot.

Fribbles, too, who had extricated himself from the "Slough of Despond" in which he had been plunged up to the neck at the commencement of the journey, felt, like his friend, the balmy influences of the genial air and cheerful scenery. Being not altogether happy in his mind about the big fish he had seen at Fochabers, nor quite satisfied on reflection with the solution he had lately arrived at touching the manner of its capture, it occurred to him that he might as well draw out his neighbour, who knew something about fishing, and so extract the truth from him. The latter good-naturedly answered a number of very silly questions, and at length said, in reply to one relating to the size and weight of salmon: "Forty pounds is not an uncommon size, or was not, in Norway."

"And how do you catch them?" asked Fribbles; "not with a fly!"

"With a fly. But that is nothing to what I have done in India with the marseer, in the tributary streams of the Ganges, far up the country. What do you think of killing one seventy-six pounds? It took me five hours to land him. It was in the Poota-poota."

"A nasty bit of jungle that, where the Chummyyogaree runs into it!" observed the Timbuctoo traveller.

"You know it?" inquired the other, somewhat surprised.

"I should think so—was encamped on its banks for six weeks."

"Fishing?"

"No; tigers."

"Oh, I see."

"A nice place enough, that bungalow of old Tungaree

Jawjebhoy's. Pity there are so many boa-constrictors in the flower-garden. I sat down on one once; thought it was a log of wood, and never found out my mistake, till, wanting to light a cheroot, I rubbed a lucifer-match on his scales. Luckily for me, one of the whatdyecallum boys was missing that morning, and the brute was gorged. He moved slowly off. It is an uncomfortable feeling, that of your seat suddenly moving from under you."

"Talking of the seat moving under you," said his neighbour, "reminds me of an adventure that happened to me at Berezoff, in the northern part of Tobolsk, in Siberia."

"I know it well," put in the traveller.

"The devil you do!" exclaimed the other.

"Oh, yes! Old Killemoffsky, the Governor of Tobolsk, is my first cousin by marriage. I spent some time with him once. Devilish good fellow for a Tartar. You know him?"

"Yes, confound him! He played me a slippery trick once."

"He is a droll fellow, Killemoffsky," said his cousin; "but you had affronted him, I suppose."

"Nothing at all of the sort."

"But he must have had some reason. What were you doing in Siberia?"

"Just lounging about, making a tour in the Russian provinces, and taking some notes for a book I had in hand, 'Wild Sports of the North.'"

"Oh! ah! I see it. He thought you would make game of him. But what did he do to you?"

"You shall hear. Being, you know, on the spot, I was naturally anxious to get at the truth of some of the stories commonly told about the mines, and of the cruelties exercised upon the unfortunate convicts there — it would make an interesting chapter in my volume, I thought

so I sent my card and a civil note to that infernal old—— I beg your pardon, he is a relative of yours—old Killemoffsky — asking an authorisation from him to visit the mining-district. He asked me to dinner."

"Uncommonly polite of him—just his way. What then? —you accepted the invitation."

"Of course."

"Sturgeon soup?"

"Yes,—capital it was—as good as turtle. Well, he was uncommonly civil—beastly polite, in fact; he offered himself to take me to the mines, and gave me a seat in the waggon. I had expressed some desire to descend one of the shafts, but on arriving at the pit mouth, I did not half like the looks of the uncouth savages among whom I was to explore, and began to think how I could back out of it. In the mean time, while some preparations were making, the governor sat down upon a basket turned upside down, and invited me to take a seat close to him on some frame-work. I had hardly sat down when a hideous shout was set up—my seat began to move, and there it was swinging aloft in the air; but in less time than it takes me to tell you, it was suddenly let down again, and I found myself slowly descending into the shaft. In vain I protested against this summary proceeding—down, down, I went, gradually into the abyss. That beast—I beg your pardon again, I forget that he is a friend of yours—that Killemoffsky leaned over the edge of the pit—I see his diabolical grin now—as he shouted out to me not to think of hurrying myself—that I should have plenty of time to take notes of all I saw—that he hoped I should be gratified, and I heard his confounded cachinnation following me as I got deeper and deeper, till all was darkness, and I was landed on terra firma.

"There I was, sir, fairly trapped. Imagine my situation. I rushed frantically in the direction of some glimmering lights, and found myself surrounded by a horde of the most hideous-looking human forms that can be conceived. In vain I tried to make myself understood—in vain I tried to explain myself by signs. One fellow, who appeared to be a sort of overseer, kept near me, and after some time brought me some black bread and a pitcher of dirty water. Was I a prisoner?—was I positively condemned by this most wicked of governors to remain here for life—here, in the bowels of the earth,—never again to see the light of day and breathe the air of heaven? All the stories I had read of the fearful atrocities practised by irresponsible agents in mines—of the wretched convicts sentenced to drag out a hated existence under ground—how men, and men of mark, too, had disappeared from the face of the earth, never to be heard of again, it was horrible! and I had no redress—my fate would be unknown. Among other strange and painful visions, I remember fancying myself reading in the second column of the Times an advertisement from my lawyers, Messrs. Plummy and Slam, of Searle Street, Lincoln's Inn, offering a reward for tidings of me—last heard of at Astrakan—any person giving information of my decease to be handsomely rewarded. Of my decease! and there I was—sound wind and limb, in robust health—buried alive. I put my hands before my face to shut out, if possible, the horrible vision, together with the dull hazy light afforded by the little oil-lamps suspended on the walls of the cavern."

"But you *did* get out again, I suppose?" inquired Brixey, intensely interested in this sad tale.

"Why, yes; or I should scarcely have been here to tell my story."

"To be sure—that is true—I forgot that circumstance."

"After a lapse of time, which seemed like a long twelvemonth, but which was, in fact, only twenty-four hours, I was led—giving myself up for lost—to the bottom of the shaft, placed securely upon the platform, and, with my friend the overseer standing by me, was drawn up again into day. Oh! the luxury of that light of day!—of that pure fresh atmosphere! but this feeling of enjoyment was suddenly stifled by a longing, a craving for vengeance—summary vengeance on the author of my misery;—that scoundrel—I ask your pardon again—that Killemoffsky!"

"You had it out with him, I suppose?" inquired the Timbuctoo traveller.

"Devil a bit—he never gave me a chance. I found myself packed, with all my traps, in a rascally cart without springs, and, with two ferocious-looking ruffians, one on each side of me, I was transported to the frontiers of the government of Tobolsk. You seem to have travelled a good deal," he continued, addressing him of the big meerschaum, "and you are personally acquainted with everybody."

"Well, I have knocked about a good deal," replied he.

"Ever in China?"

"All over it.'

"Borneo?"

"Twice."

"United States?"

"Of course."

"South America?'

"From Panama to Patagonia."

"Then," exclaimed the other, turning suddenly round, and looking his Timbuctoo neighbour fixedly in the face, "you are either Tom Manners or the devil! I thought I

had seen as much of the world as anybody, but you beat me by a long chalk."

"Sir!" returned the other, "I *am* Tom Manners, and you are Fred Towers. I wonder you did not recognise me before. Don't you recollect our being quartered together at Corfu?" and taking the hand of his old acquaintance in his bony fingers, he gave it a hearty shake, just as the coach drove up to the door of the hotel at Morayburgh.

It was here our travellers were to leave the coach. Here was to begin the business part of their expedition; here they were, as both Brixey and Fribbles thought, to take leave of civilisation altogether, and from this they were to "take a header" into the unknown deeps of moor and forest life. As the coach drove off, and Brixey exchanged a friendly nod of farewell with his late fellow-travellers, he felt as if another tie was severed which had bound him to the world he knew, and all his experiences of a new life were yet to be made. There was a choking, uneasy feeling about this thought, but he gulped it down, and joined Fribbles and the Captain in arranging for the disposal of the luggage and the dogs, which, by-the-bye, had cost the firm half a sovereign for damage done to the wardrobe of the guard. Fribbles's anchor and cable had already excited much interest in the coach-passengers, and now became an object of much speculation to the lookers-on. The impression made upon most minds was that it was one of those harmless eccentricities peculiar to the Southern, the carrying about the emblem of hope as part of his personal luggage; and the singular appearance of the proprietor, habited as he was in a tweed suit of striking pattern and unknown fashion, rather favoured this idea.

The first thing to be thought of was the coming to speech with Mr. Evan M'Snail, the factor of the Tommiebeg pro-

perty, and after talking it over, if was settled that Brixey and Fribbles should go at once in search of that important personage, and endeavour to engage him to accompany them on the morrow to the shooting-lodge; but while the two friends are threading their way through the streets of Morayburgh—(the house of Mr. M'Snail was, their guide told them, "a wie bittock ower bye, twaxt John Maclaren the flesher's and Jamie Geddes the clothier's)—we will devote the time to a sketch of the individual who is shortly to appear in the scene.

Mr. Evan M'Snail was a man very much looked up to in the township of which he was a citizen; long-headed and shrewd, with the bump of caution largely developed; he was slow and methodical in all his ways and dealings. He had served his time, in his youth, in a lawyer's office at Glasgow; and though he had never become a member of the profession, he was supposed to have as good a knowledge of law as either of the partners in the firm of his former employers, Messrs. Quilter and M'Wheedle, writers to the signet—especially in the points more immediately relating to his present business of factor to extensive estates in the shires of Inverness, Moray, and Banff; thus, in the matter of "tofts, crofts, mosses, muirs, outfield and infield, buildings, orchards, dovecotes, with the rights of net and coble in water and loch, tiends, parsonage and vicarage, annexis and connexis, rights of pasturage, fuel feal and divot, parts pendicles and pertinents, whatsoever," he was a match for any one.

Independently of the occupation his agency entailed upon him, Mr. Evan M'Snail was not above doing a little business on his own account whenever an opportunity presented itself—whether as principal or broker, it was all one to him: he was always dealing—paintings or patent

ploughs, old china or Cheviots, books or building land, it did not signify: he was always ready for a deal, and his judgment being good, most of his speculations had turned out successfully, which made him a man well to do in the world. So Evan M'Snail was looked up to and respected accordingly, as all well-to-do people should be.

Now it so happened, that on the morning of the day on which our travellers arrived at Morayburgh, Evan had attended a "roup," or sale by auction, of the effects of Baillie Anderson's widow, and had become proprietor of sundry wonderful specimens of old china, on the which he had long fixed his eyes covetously, even in the lifetime of his old friend the baillie. He had now secured the whole quantity at a low price (connoisseurs of Dresden and Chelsea ware are rare so far north), and unwilling to trust them out of his sight to the clumsy handling of porters and servants, he had conveyed them himself to his house, and was busied in the kitchen in dusting and washing the lovely teapots and the almost transparent cups and saucers tenderly with his own hands, warding off with much difficulty the officious attacks of his tall, strapping maid-of-all-work, Lizzie, who stood by, with a cloth in her hand, longing to be at them, and wondering what "could hae pit it in the master's head to fash himsel wi' thae senseless pats an' thae bit piggies."

With his coat off, and an apron tied under his chin to protect his waistcoat, Evan was heart and soul in his occupation. It was a labour of love; for, independently of the sense of the profitable investment they afforded, he had really acquired considerable taste for antiquities of all sorts, when a loud peal was heard at the door-bell, so loud and startling as nearly to make him drop the delicate china teapot he held in his hand.

"Eh! bide awhile, Lizzie," he said, with a look of annoyance, to the maid, who was already smoothing her front hair before a bit of looking-glass suspended near the window; "if it's visitors, I'm no at hame."

"An' if it's no," asked the maiden, "will I find what for it's come?"

"Just that," he replied, as he went on carefully dusting with a feather the deep-cut mouldings of the teapot. "That, lassie," he continued to himself, "is no to be trusted wi' chinay the like o' this. I canna leave it; but it will no be business so late." Which conclusion he soon found to be faulty; for the maid returning, brought him word that twa gentlemen were speering after him.

"What like, are they?"

"Oh! he's a fine man, the biggest o' the twa," replied the girl; "an' the ither's a douce-looking auld carle."

"What do they want?"

"It's yoursel they're wantin'."

"And their arrand?"

"I'm thinkin' it's forrin folk. Whan I askit their business, first ane an' then the ither talkit so strange, I couldna mak it out: but it's no English."

An' ye've let them come in?"

"Eh, sure! they'll be standin' in the ha' the noo."

"Are ye demented, lassie? It's thieves!" Saying which, Evan, without thinking of setting down his precious teapot, rushed hurriedly into the narrow entrance hall, and found himself face to face with Messrs. Brixey and Fribbles, who were standing on the door-mat.

"Is Mr. Evan M'Snail at home?" demanded the latter of the two gentlemen, with much dignity.

"And what may be your business with Mr. M'Snail?" asked the owner of that patronymic, rather dubiously,

and beginning to fancy he might have put himself in a false position by acting so precipitately. For it was tolerably evident to him that there was nothing in the appearance of his visitors to warrant his suspicion of their purloining the old great-coat hanging on its peg on the wall.

"What's that to you?" answered Fribbles, sharply, "our business is with Mr. M'Snail."

"If you'll step in here," said the discomfited Evan, "I'll just go and see if he's at home." Then introducing his visitors into a comfortable little room, half office half parlour, he left them there, rushed hastily to the kitchen, put on his coat, and bid the servant fetch him his hat and walking-stick. On returning, he communicated to her his plans:

"An' noo, Lizzie, ye'll no set a finger on thae things," he said, pointing to the china. "I'll slip round by the backside and ring the bell at the door-front, and ye'll let me in, and ye'll show me in to the gentlemen, an' ye'll say it's Mr. M'Snail. I'm thinking they'll no recognise having seen me before."

This was a bold "coup,' but on the face of it there was reason enough in it, because a man in his shirt-sleeves, with a coarse kitchen apron fastened round his neck, carrying a teapot in his hand, whom you have just seen in a state of considerable excitement, and taken for a servant, would be hard to identify in the person of the staid, sober-looking man of business who rings the bell at the street door, a minute after he has left you, and is introduced in the character of head of the house.

Both the gentlemen had an indistinct notion of having at some time or other seen the face of the individual who, after making many apologies for not having been at home to receive them, welcomed them to his house, and did the honours in fitting manner.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Mr. M'Snail's mode of doing Business—How the Lodge is to be Furnished—Captain Downey, after astonishing some Natives and a Bagman, writes three Letters in blank.

"And so," said the respectable and rather jolly-looking personage who had just entered the room, and Brixey had explained the purpose of their visit, "so ye are the English gentlemen that have taken the Tommiebeg muirs. I was no expecting ye so soon."

"Why, to-day's the 10th," said Fribbles; "and grouse shooting begins on the 12th, the day after to-morrow don't it?"

"That's the very truth," replied Evan; "there's nae denying the fact."

"So, of course," continued Fribbles, "we mean to go tomorrow to the lodge, to be ready for Wednesday."

"Just so, just so—in course—that's just to be expected. And are ye from Aberdeen the day? Ye'll be glad of a little something after the journey. The sperits, Lizzie," he continued, to the servant who answered his summons, "an' the rest. And" (in a low whisper) "mind ye no to handle the chinay."

"Our idea is," said Brixey, after many thanks and refusals on his part of the proffered hospitality; "our idea is to go down tomorrow to take possession of the lodge; and we hoped you might be able to make it convenient to accompany us."

"Eh! that's certain. Ye've no seen the lodge yet?"

"Seen it? Oh, no."

"I thought so," replied Mr. M'Snail, significantly.

"Why? I suppose we have nothing to do but to go into it, and it will be all right."

"That's a fact—that's a certain fact: go into it, an' it's a' right. It's just that."

There was evidently something which weighed heavily on the mind of Mr. M'Snail. The arrival of the maid, bearing a tray with glasses and sugar and toddy ladles, gave him time to think. As soon as she had set down the things, he produced a key from his pocket, and opening the door of a cupboard in the corner, he took from it a handsome two-gallon keg, painted green with black hoops, and placed it on its stand on the table, to the utter amazement of Brixey and his friend.

"An' now just mak' for yourselves, gentlemen, or may be ye'll prefer my mixin' it for ye." Saying which, he forthwith, and in spite of the remonstrance of his two visitors, made three stiff tumblers of whiskey toddy.

"Ye'll find it no that bad to take—the sperits are the richt Glenlivat," he said, as he filled a wine-glass from the tumbler before him.

"Indeed, my dear sir, you must excuse us; it is too early in the day," said Brixey, looking with some anxiety at his young friend, who appeared likely to yield to the seduction of the aromatic liquid, "and before dinner too."

"Eh, sirs, there's naething mair appetising than a glass or twa o' whusky toddy. Just help yourselves. And here's wushing ye baith your very good healths, and good sport at the muir."

Fribbles had already succumbed to the temptation; and Brixey, after toying for some time with the wooden ladle, filled his glass, and in a fit of absence emptied it; and

then, in the same abstracted state, did it again. Perhaps he thought it would be uncourteous to decline this hospitable entertainment. No one could be more averse than he was to wounding the feelings of any one. And then, the toddy was unexceptionable: there was no denying that.

"Ye were telling me ye thocht of taking possession of the lodge," said Evan, as he set down his glass, and began slowly charging it again.

"Of course," answered Fribbles. "We mean to sleep there tomorrow night."

"And ye hae doubtless brought with ye a' the necessary things—the linen an' the plate—an' the pots an' the pans for the kitchen—and dishes an' plates, an' knives an' forks, an'——"

"I say, you know," exclaimed Fribbles, "all that ought to be found for us. A few things, perhaps, there will be to get; but the place is furnished, ain't it?"

"Well," answered Evan, slowly, "it 's no precisely furnished a'thegither—that is, wi' everything."

"Perhaps," said Brixey, "you'll be so good as to write down for us before we leave in the morning, a list of the few things it will be necessary to take with us. We can get everything here, I suppose?"

"Oh, surely! you can get everything here. Oh! yes; that is to say, in the toun—in Morayburgh. Have ye seen to getting a conveyance?"

"Yes: we are to have the dog-cart from the hotel."

"The what?"

"The dog-cart. There'll be room for us all, and the dogs besides; plenty, I should think."

"But the furniture?" This was put in a dubious kind of tone by Evan, who was busy in concocting another brew of toddy for the party.

"The furniture?"

"Aye; just the sheets an' the linen, an' a'."

"It will all go well enough in the dog-cart, I take it," said Fribbles, making an onslaught on the fresh supply of liquid.

"But there's the tables and the chairs," observed Evan.

"Tables and chairs!" cried Fribbles.

"Tables and chairs!" echoed Brixey.

"Just the tables an' the chairs. They'll be hard to find by Tommiebeg; forbye the bedding and besteads, the lodge is no that completely furnished; an' maybe a carpet for the living room; an' wash stands an' basins an' that for the sleeping rooms. And then there maun be a table an' chairs for the kitchen—the servants will no like to stand always; and they'll be wanting beds and bedding besides. It was all sold by public roup the last year at Grantoun, when Sir Tydley Wynke, Baronet—he was a third cousin of the laird's—that is, by the mither's side—she was a Cawmell—gave up the shootings. An' then it will no do to forget the saucepans an' the kettles, an' the stewpans an' the branders, an' the spit for the kitchen. I'm certain ye will no consider that out o' the way. An' there's the teapots an' coffee-pots, an' cups an' saucers—they maun be had."

Evan went on thus enumerating the different articles comprising the entire furniture of a dwelling-house, becoming bolder and bolder as he proceeded, and taking the silence of his listeners for a complete acquiescence in all the catalogue he went through. But this silence did not arise altogether from the motives he imagined. In fact, both Brixey and Fribbles were dumbfoundered.

"I say, I call this a confounded go!" said the latter of these two gentlemen, as soon as he found words to express his sentiments.

"I must confess, I had no notion whatever of all this. I considered the house to be furnished. We certainly have been much deceived," said the former, going through the pantomime of buttoning his pockets. "How are we to get all these things? Setting aside the expense, it will take a week, at the least, to complete the furnishing."

"Oh, bother the furnishing!" cried Fribbles. "I shall go to the inn at once, and live there. There *is* an inn, I suppose, or a public-house?"

"Eh, sure, there's the inn at Speytown."

"I thought so," said Fribbles. "How far is that from the shooting moors?"

"Nine miles, or thereaway," replied Evan; "may be more, may be less; but ye may do it by a horse in two hours, or thereby; the roads are no so gude as might be wushed. Ye'll do better to stay at the lodge. With a bit painting an' whiting, an' may be a new paper in the living-room—the rains cam in in the summer, and made sair mischief; and that minds me the roof is no exactly in repair—but that's easy to be done; an' the chimlay, too—the stones are loosed wi' the wind. But, for a' that, the lodge is very comfortable a'thegither."

"In fact," said Brixey, "from what I can gather, there are only the bare walls."

"No, no! no so bad as that," answered Evan, apologetically. "There's the doors an' the windows; it's like enough a glass or twa is broke w' the coos—they're aye breaking out from the park, an' pokin' wi' their horns, an' flisking wi' their tails. Uncanny beasties they are!"

"There's nothing left then, it seems, for us, but to put in what furniture we shall require," observed Brixey, after a few moments' reflection. "But I must say, I was not at all prepared for this. I certainly was under a false

impression. And pray, Mr. M'Snail, how long do you think it will take to make the place habitable?"

"Oh, hang it, you know! It's a regular take in, this is!" exclaimed Fribbles, angrily.

"But, my dear Peter," said his friend, "there is no choice. If we had known all this before, we would not have hired the moor; but it is too late now. We must get into the house as soon as we can; and perhaps Mr. M'Snail will tell us how long it may require to do this?"

"Just a day—maybe anither half to it," answered Evan; "that is to say, if ye are willing to take the furniture, which is now at Speytoun. I bought it all, for the convenience of the next incomer. Ye can take it of me, by hire or by sale; an' I'll go mysel airly tomorrow, an' see to its puttin' in. You can go and sleep at Speytown, an' a' shall be ready, an' ye may shoot if ye will, an' dine at home the night. If Mr. Peter is no inclined to that, the things may be had in Morayburgh, and in a week to ten days ye may get into the house. It's no for me to say—'every tub stans on its ain end'—the things is all amaist new; but a man kens best his ain business; I'll no advise; but it's a' ready—just at Grantown. And as to servants——"

"There's another difficulty," said the perplexed Brixey. "What are we to do about servants? All our troubles come upon us at once."

"Ye'll just want twa lassies to the house work an' the cooking, wi' a stout laddie to help. It's easy got. I hae them ready; and they'll be there with me tomorrow, helpin' the pitting a' to richts. But it's no for me to advise."

"Well," said Brixey, whose spirits began to rise, "I must admit you make matters very easy, and we cannot do

better than put ourselves in your hands. Eh! Peter? what do you say?"

"Oh! I don't care. You know best. I think, you know, it's a downright swindle, that advertisement. I've got a copy of it, and it says 'the lodge is furnished with all modern conveniences'; and if that does not mean furniture, I should like to know what it does mean. Isn't furniture a modern convenience, I wonder?"

"My dear Peter, when you come to my time of life, and know the world as well as I do (poor Brixey!), you will find it the best policy to take things easy, especially when you cannot help it. The moor was taken by me for my own health, and I am prepared to bear the extra expense this oversight of ours has entailed on us. And now, Mr. M'Snail, will you let us know what the cost of the furniture will be for the season. As this is our first trial of Highland life, we can hardly say, now, whether or no we may be tempted to go on with it another year; so it will be the wiser plan to hire the necessary things for fitting up the house, which you have in your keeping, and which I conclude will comprehend everything we are likely to want."

"Precisely so, entirely that. Oh! you're perfectly richt," said Evan; "but," he continued, as he rang the bell, and ordered the kettle to be brought in. "It's no easy talkin' wi' dry mouths, so we'll just take another tumbler," and not heeding the vehement protestations of his elder guest, three fresh tumblers were smoking on the board.

"And now," he went on, as he filled his glass from the tumbler, "in respect to the furnishing—fifteen pounds the month will no be out o' the way; wi' the option of buying it a'thegither, an ye see fitting, for just two hundred at the end of the term, and deducting the month's payment out

o' the tottle. It's amaist new, and ye can make your ain terms wi' the twa lassies and the laddie. I ken them well, and they're just honest and weel conditioned, a' the three."

The maid here entered with a three-cornered note for Brixey; it was from the Captain, informing him that dinner was waiting; so, after shaking hands cordially with Mr. M'Snail, begging him to bring "the bit writing," as he called the contract for the furniture, in order that it might be signed by all the parties interested, and to give them the pleasure of his society in the evening, the two gentlemen took their departure; not, however, before they had swallowed the toddy, in order not to hurt the feelings of their hospitable new friend.

It is a certain fact that they both left the house in a singularly pleasant frame of mind; and that, when in the street, Fribbles indulged in some very loud, but rather indistinct, expressions of attachment to Mr. Evan M'Snail; averring that he was "a regular brick, and no mistake." But it requires considerable practice to indulge in three very strong tumblers of whiskey toddy before dinner without experiencing a certain elevation of spirits; which is, perhaps, more palpably evident to a looker-on than to the party himself.

Captain Downey had purposely avoided accompanying his friends to Mr. M'Snail's for two or three reasons. In the first place, he had a violent dislike to putting himself out of his way, or taking any trouble about anything which did not immediately conduce to his own interests; and secondly, he argued from the inexperience of Messrs. Brixey and Fribbles in the dealing with factors in general, that the being thrown on their own resources would tend to strengthen the reliance they had upon his superior talents, whereby his influence over them could not fail to be mate-

rially increased. His object was to make himself necessary to them, and he imagined they must in this instance eventually have recourse to him for advice in the negotiation.

Having ordered dinner, and astonished the landlord by his taste and knowledge of the *cuisine*, he lit a cigar, and lounged down the yard to look at the dog-cart proposed for their journey on the morrow. He walked through the stables, and after giving his opinion to the ostler on the management of horses, made him open his eyes by putting to him that famous question of Mrs. Mary Wedlake's, which has almost become a household word. "Do you bruise your oats?" He then sauntered up the yard, exchanged a few complimentary words, *en passant*, with a bare-footed, rosy-legged girl, who was filling a pitcher at the pump; and then dropping in to the room behind the bar, he gave the landlady in a few minutes a most exalted opinion of her guest, by making inquiries about the neighbouring gentry, with all of whom he seemed to be on terms of intimacy. Meeting the landlord at the front door, he had a chat with him on the subject of sherries, and enlightened him with his ideas on the different growths of that wine, enlarged upon the qualities of the pale, the brown, and the golden; and mystified him altogether by expatiating on the peculiar merits of the Amontillado, and other pale dry wines with hard names, never heard of before.

On leaving his host, he strolled up the street, and looked in critically at the shop windows, till he came to a gunsmith's, where he finished his cigar in lively converse with the proprietor on the comparative advantages of the breech-loader and the muzzle-loader; he took down all the guns, one after another, put them up to his shoulder, tried the locks, and discussed their several points; and then, having thrown out a hint of the probability of his looking in again,

and getting his ammunition from him, he left the gunmaker perfectly enchanted at his affability, as well as at his extraordinary knowledge of fire-arms.

He next pursued his way slowly up the street to the great admiration of the shop-keeping population of Morayburgh; till, on seeing the post-office, he tapped at the window, and inquired if there were any letters to his address there, expressing much surprise and some doubts when he was told there were none. This business done, he lounged back again to the hotel, and hearing nothing of Brixey and Fribbles began to wonder what could have detained them so long.

Finding the time begin to hang heavy on hand, he looked into the commercial room, and was presently engaged in conversation with a bagman who travelled in the hard wood line. Here, again, he displayed a consummate knowledge of the various qualities of wood as applicable to the lathe, which impressed his listener with the greatest respect and admiration for his extraordinary experience in his own line: so much so, that he presented the Captain with the card of his principals, Messrs. Ashmore, Oakley, and Co., of Liverpool; and begged his patronage whenever he should require wood for turning. He deposited the pasteboard carefully in his pocket-book, and promised the delighted traveller that he would not fail to give him his custom, and his recommendation as well.

It takes some time, albeit we have not said much there anent, to dispose of three big glasses of whiskey punch, and if the Captain could have guessed that his friends were by this time only half through their second tumbler, and were fairly in for a third, he would probably have gone straightway to Mr. M'Snail's to see how things were going on; but as it was now getting late, he thought it impossible they could be much longer, so drawing an arm chair

to the window of the sitting-room upstairs, he spent some time in looking out to see them arrive.

A bright thought seemed suddenly to strike him; it occurred to him that he had some letters to write, so ringing for paper and envelopes he took the opportunity of ascertaining from the waiter what time the post went out for Blair Athol and Dunrobin. He then sat down to write: but his mode of proceeding was peculiar,—he began where most people end, with the envelopes; three of which he directed, after some little consideration, and then folding as many blank sheets of note-paper, he put one into each cover; rang the bell again for some postage stamps, which he duly affixed, and then laid the blank letters on the chimney-piece, arranging them in a careless-looking manner, but so that the addresses or at least a significant part of each one, should catch the eye.

Under the impression that some of our readers may be curious to know who were the distinguished correspondents of Captain Downey, we have no scruples in stating that they were—

THE LORD JOHN DOREY,
Inverbogie,
Aberdeenshire.

SOAPY SPUNGE, ESQ,
THE VISCOUNT SNAFFLES,
Martingale Hall,
Doncaster.

and,

THE MOST NOBLE
THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS,
St. Kitt's,
Diddlesex.

## CHAPTER XX.

Captain Downey likes posting his own letters—Mr. Evan M'Snail makes a Bet with the Captain, and loses.

"THAT train is laid," said Captain Downey to himself, when he had disposed of the mysterious letters to his satisfaction, and he threw himself again into the arm-chair at the window, "I don't care now how soon those fellows come back," and he looked out impatiently upon the street. "What a bore it is being kept waiting for one's dinner; the fish will be quite spoiled, and the fowls roasted to rags. I have more than half a mind to go and look them up—or, stay, I have it,—I will write a line to them, and send it over to this M'Snail's." This he did, and his note had the effect of breaking up the conference in the manner we have seen.

In the course of ten minutes he had the satisfaction of seeing the two gentlemen approaching the hotel, and remarked, with some surprise, the energetic gesticulations and rather unsteady gait of the younger one. He then retired to his own room, ringing the bell for dinner on his way.

"I am glad," said Brixey, as he entered the room, "we have not kept the Captain waiting. I was afraid we should have found him here impatient for his dinner; but I suppose he is not ready yet."

"Oh, I say, look here!" cried Fribbles, turning over and reading the addresses of the envelopes on the chimney-

piece; "he has been writing no end of letters—all tip-top fellows, too. Dash it! he has got no end of swells among his acquaintance. Why, if here isn't one to a real marquis—and here's one to Lord John Dorey—that must be the Lord John he was going to—and, by Jove! here is another to that first-rate steeple-chase rider, Soapy Spunge, who is staying with that famous racing-man, Lord Snaffle!"

"I am sorry to have kept you so long," said Brixey to the Captain, who entered the room in time to see Fribbles replacing the letters; "we have got on capitally—famously."

"You have not hurried away on my account, I hope," said the Captain. "I thought, perhaps, you would be glad to get to dinner. As to me, I always dine late—the later the better—it is all one to me. By-the-by," he addressed himself to the waiter who was bringing in the soup, "here are some letters for the post—you will give them to the landlord—do you hear—to send." Having allowed the man sufficient time to carry them down stairs, he seemed suddenly to change his mind, and called out to him from the top of the stairs to bring them back, saying that he preferred posting them himself, as they were of importance. So the letters were brought back (after having been duly examined below) and replaced on the shelf.

"I hate trusting letters of consequence in strange hands," he said, apologetically, to Brixey; "I never feel easy unless I post them myself or let my own people do it. I should be vexed, too—very—if two of these were to miscarry, for they are to some good friends of mine, to whom I have been making my excuses for breaking engagements with them to come to you."

Brixey could not find words sufficiently eloquent enough

to express his sense of the favour conferred upon him. Fribbles was more demonstrative: he astonished Captain Downey by giving him a smart slap on the back, and informing him that he was "a jolly old cock," which compliment was about as palatable to that individual as the familiarity that accompanied it.

In the course of the dinner Brixey acquainted the Captain with the result of the interview with Mr. M'Snail. It was pleasing intelligence enough to him that they were likely to find the lodge habitable, for, strange as it may appear, Captain Downey had felt sundry misgivings on that head; it mattered little to him how the thing was managed, provided it *was* managed; it was a weight off his mind. His mother-wit suggested to him that his friends had been "done" somehow; but what was that to him? It was satisfactory, too, that little hit he had made, by means of his fictitious correspondence; it could not fail to impress his friends with a sense of his position in society, while it tended also to increase the weight of the obligation they were under to him. Nor is it altogether unreasonable to infer that he must have had some ulterior object in allowing the names of his illustrious correspondents to be seen by the landlord, for Captain Downey, like a skilful chess-player, never made a useless move.

Brixey experienced a feeling of happiness and a peace of mind to which he had been a stranger ever since he had taken the moor, and the spirits of his young friend had risen suddenly from zero to fever-heat ever since the interview with Mr. M'Snail. It is possible the judicious treatment they received at the hands of the latter personage might have gone for something in bringing about this salutary change. Certain it is that Evan, on his arrival in the evening, was received with the most lively expressions

of satisfaction by the two sportsmen, was forced into the most comfortable arm-chair (except one, *that* was Downey's), and on his declining to join them in their claret, on the plea of its being too cold for his stomach, the whiskey and its accessories were ordered "for his behoof."

A close observer might have seen a shade pass across the countenance of Mr. Evan M'Snail when he was introduced to Captain Downey, one short glance at whom sufficed to convince him that he was in the presence of an individual of very different calibre to his companions. He did not quite like the Captain's cool, distant manner—it contrasted too violently with the friendly welcome he had met with from Brixey and Fribbles. He caught the cold, calm eye of this unexpected person uncomfortably fixed upon him two or three times, and it was as though a spell were cast upon him. Every now and then, as if he had been sensible of sudden shooting-pains about the region of his breast-pocket, his hand would involuntarily wander there, and press upon the part affected. All this time he *felt* the Captain's eye to be upon him, and he was conscious that every movement of his was carefully noted. Having after a time produced the effect which he probably desired, the Captain quietly changed his tactics, and succeeded to a certain extent in putting the factor at ease again.

After much desultory conversation, carried on principally between Brixey and Evan, the former seemed inclined to follow the example of Fribbles, who, overcome perhaps by the fatigue of the journey, had fallen fast asleep with a cigar in his mouth. His head nodded helplessly two or three times—he started up as often—opened his eyes and made an incoherent remark *à propos* of nothing; his head fell back again—he woke himself again with a loud snore—

again relapsed, and presently, dropping the toddy-ladle he had hitherto clenched in his hand, was sound asleep.

The eyes of the Captain and M'Snail met. Each—as though they had been puppets worked by the same motive wire—looked at the two sleepers, and then at the same moment encountered the other's look. They drew their chairs closer together; they knew one another as well as if their acquaintance had been of many years' growth.

"You have brought that paper—the contract, I mean—for them to sign?" said the Captain, glancing towards the happy wanderers in dreamland, and then levelling his eyes straight at the breast-pocket of Mr. M'Snail.

"Oh, aye!—certainly. It's only a bit writing—it's no material—just a few words set together—in dealings with gentlemen—it's no important. Are ye for Tommiebeg, too? It's a fine muir. The baronet from England, Sir Tydley Wynke——"

"But about this writing?" The Captain quite ignored Evan's attempt to shift the subject.

"Aye—Oh, aye!—the writing—Oh! sure; but deed it's a trifling matter, and may be it's as well pit away altogether—it's no material whatever. As I was remarking, when the baronet from England——"

"Let me see the paper!" exclaimed the Captain, bringing his hawk-eye to bear upon Evan, who cowered under the glance. "Hand it over, old fellow. I dare say it's all right enough."

"Oh, certainly—Oh, aye! It's a' richt enough."

"Well, then, out with it, man, or I shall begin to think it is all wrong."

"It's no THAT," said Evan, as he slowly produced an old letter, after fumbling at his breast-pocket for some time. "That will be just a letter from Sandy Grant about

the keeper's place at the muir; he's a very highly respectable man is Sandy. It's his sister's son that's made the new page in the laird's family, and——"

"But the paper!" interrupted Downey.

"Yes, to be sure, the paper. And *that* will not be it," said Evan, bringing out with much difficulty a printed paper. "It's the catylogue of Baillie Anderson's roup the day——"

"Oh, never mind," said the Captain quietly. "I don't care, you know; if you do not choose to show it me it is no matter, my friends will do nothing without consulting me. I shall see it in time, and shall of course give them my advice in the business; they never do anything without me. I don't want to see it; if you cannot put your hand upon it easily, don't trouble yourself."

It was a moment of anguish to Evan; he found himself in a cleft stick. He winced under the cool address of the Captain; and at length, after some hesitation and more fumbling in his pocket, he brought out a folded sheet of paper. Downey's hand was stretched out to take it from him, when a restless movement of Fribbles, accompanied by an expression of that young gentleman's resolution not to go home till morning, had the effect of making Evan restore the paper to his pocket, and of reminding the Captain to re-light his cigar, which he had suffered, in the course of conversation, to go out.

On Fribbles re-settling himself in his cnair, and relapsing into a comfortable snore, the paper was again produced, and, after some little more coquetting, handed by Evan to the Captain.

"H'm," exclaimed the latter, after slowly perusing the document, and looking steadily at the factor, who was busied in filling his glass, apparently unconscious of being

submitted to the piercing glance of Downey. "Not so bad! Fifteen pounds a month! Not a bad return for your capital. I suppose that would more than buy the whole lot?"

"Eh; but ye'll no forget to remember, it's amaist new; and there's the moving it away, and the pitting it in the house, and then the flitting again, and the damages and risks, forbye the interest on moneys laid out; and there's the accommodation."

"You have allowed a pretty wide margin for all these items. But how is this? I understood from my friends, that in the event of their taking the shootings for a term, and preferring to purchase the furniture, the monthly payments were to be deducted from the two hundred. I see no mention made of any such condition here."

"Oh, it's no matter," answered M'Snail, looking rather discomfited. "That's just a thing understood; in dealings with such gentlemen I'll no require a steepulation the like o' that."

"Yes, but *they* will," replied the Captain. "*I* do for them. This will not do with me. I cannot allow my friends to be imposed upon thus. Fifteen pounds a month for a few deal tables and chairs! I shall not think of recommending them to sign this agreement till we have seen the furniture."

"Oh! it's first-rate, the furniture; it's all from the upholder in Inverness. The baronet from England, Sir Tydley Wynke——"

"Confound Sir Tydley Wynke!" said the Captain, angrily. "Look here! I will not see my friends done in this way; they trust to me, and it is my duty as a friend to protect them. I have made up my mind to do the furnishing myself."

"Yoursel!"

"Yes, myself; why not? You don't suppose you are to get *all* the advantage, do you?"

"Eh! no, by no means. *You*'ll furnish it yoursel? I was thinking ——" Evan hesitated.

"What?" inquired Downey.

"Eh, Captain!—but ye'll be affronted, may be."

"Affronted! no. Why, what do you mean?"

"Well, Captain, I was thinking—it cam into my head; an' when a notion comes into the head, there it will be: it's no easy to flisk it away."

"Do make haste! They will wake up presently," said the Captain sharply.

"I was thinking—but I'll no be so bold."

"Do speak out, man; you had better out with it. They will be awake in five minutes, and then it will be too late."

Evan moved his chair noiselessly still nearer to the Captain; he looked at the sleepers, and then peered anxiously round the room to be sure there were no listeners. Having satisfied himself in this particular, he whispered in Downey's ear: "Captain, ye'll no be fo-setting yourself in a body's way?"

"What the devil do you mean?" demanded the latter; "speak out, can't you?"

"But, Captain, ye're sae dour an' camsteery; that is to say, ye're so high, an' so ill to talk with."

"You must excuse my leaving you for the present," said Downey, rising from his chair. "I must post these letters myself; they are of importance. If I do not find you here on my return, I wish you good night. Have the goodness to tell my friends, when they awake, that I shall be back soon."

"Nay, but, Captain dear, bide a while, bide a while," whispered Evan; "I've a proposition to make; that is to say, if you are that way inclined. I'm thinking to gain a wager on ye. I'll bet just three to one the gentlemen do not sign the contract for the furniture the nicht."

"Done, in fivers. Fifteen pounds to five, you said, I think. I book the bet," responded Downey, pulling out his pocket-book.

"You're ower hard upon me, Captain."

"Is it a bet, or is it not?" inquired the latter. "I cannot remain here talking over a trumpery bet like this."

"Well, we'll say ten to five," suggested Evan.

"Fifteen!"

"Ten!"

"Fifteen! I am going," said Downey, as he made a step or two towards his hat on the side table.

"Oh! it's too much, the odds."

"But you're sure to win, you know," said the Captain, laughing, and patting Evan on the back. "Your money's safe. I enter it then: Mr. M'Snail, fifteen pounds to five that Mr. Brixey does not sign the contract for the furniture to-night; and there's my stake," added he, as he wrapped five of the sovereigns he had borrowed from Brixey in a paper, and deposited the little packet in a china flower-vase over the chimney. You can place yours here too. It will scarcely do, you know, to say anything of our little bet together, and the winner has nothing to do but to help himself. But, tell me, is the furniture really what it ought to be—the beds, and bedding, and all that? Because, you know, *I* have a particular interest in its being so."

"It's the very same the baronet from England, Sir Tydley Wynke——"

"Every article?"

"Just every article," replied Evan, as he slowly drew from his pocket-book three dirty five-pound notes of the Bank of Scotland, and enveloped them in a piece of paper furnished him by Captain Downey, who kept a sharp eye on the process.

"There, that is all right now," said that gentleman, when he had seen the stake dropped into the flower-vase. "But when will the place be ready? No humbug, you know."

"Ye may have your dinner after the shooting on Wednesday, an' a' will be ready. May be there'll be a day or two's work for the mason and the carpenter."

In due time Brixey and Fribbles were roused from their nap; the latter, half asleep still, succeeded, after making sundry failures, in lighting his bed-room candle, and wishing the party good night, staggered out of the room. After some little preface, the contract was put before Brixey, who was scarcely more awake than his friend; a pen was put into his hand, already dipped in the ink, and he signed his name to the agreement, which Mr. M'Snail deposited carefully in his breast-pocket, while Captain Downey quietly took the two little parcels from the china vase, and with a smile of intelligence at Evan, transferred them to his purse.

It was settled that Mr. M'Snail was to get under weigh early the next morning, and go forward to put in the furniture and servants, and to set the lodge in order; while the gentlemen, who had sundry purchases of stores to make for present consumption, were to start later in the day, and to dine and sleep at Speytown. Mr. M'Snail was to meet them at Tommiebeg on the following day, the 12th, to put them in possession and talk over the moor.

## CHAPTER XXI.

The drive to Speytown—Captain Downey goes duck hunting—Fribbles's first essay in driving—Ponto distinguishes himself—The Captain nearly in trouble.

Some time was spent by our travellers on the following morning in providing themselves with various household stores for present use. Some dozens of Preston Pans beer, and sundry samples of wines, as well as whiskies of Glenlivat, Farintosh, and Balintome, for approval, from the landlord of the hotel, filled two corpulent hampers—a large box of groceries, tea and sugar, coffee and chocolate, sauces and soap, candles and curry powder, mixed pickles and pepper and salt, mustard and marmalade, was flanked by another imposing case containing a ham, a side of bacon, two or three tongues, and other comestibles—all these, added to the bulk of the heavy luggage, the gun and rod cases and Fribbles's anchor, were put together outside the hotel to be packed in a cart which had been chartered for the lodge at Tommiebeg.

It was a bright and beautiful day when the dog-cart, with the light baggage and the dogs stowed away inside was brought round to the door. The vehicle was of the old style of build, on very high wheels, roomy, and heavy. The horse seemed quite in character with it—he too was high, roomy, and heavy, long in the back and ewe-necked, which latter peculiarity he appeared himself to consider a blemish, if one might judge from the remarkable way in

which he persevered in tossing his head, in the endeavour to arch his neck perhaps, if it were not to jerk the rein out of the hand of the ostler who held him tight under the chin.

To the immense delight of Fribbles, Captain Downey had expressed a preference for a back seat, and as Brixey was supposed to balance the cart best by sitting behind also, he was enabled to gratify his darling wish of being next the driver, by which arrangement he hoped to learn a few of the early principles of driving, an accomplishment hitherto altogether neglected in his education—he even aspired to taking the reins himself as soon as they cleared the town.

At a signal from the driver that all was right, the ostler let go the rein, and with a jerk that nearly shook off the gentlemen behind and made them hold fast by the rail, the horse, as though proud of his load, dashed off in a playful canter, while the ostler was observed by Brixey and the Captain to run into the middle of the street, and to watch with a delighted grin the devious progress of the carriage.

It is reasonable to suppose that Fribbles's "get up," which was quite regardless of expense, might create some curiosity among such of the quiet citizens of Morayburgh as happened to witness the start; but it is worthy of remark that the horse, too, seemed seized presently with a violent longing to see him, as he had no sooner reduced his pace to a trot than he kept his head obstinately turned to the left, nor could any reasoning or persuasion on the part of the driver induce him to do otherwise—it was only by tugging hard at the off rein that he was able to prevent the animal from following his nose. Two or three near shaves within an inch of the carts on the road induced the Captain to

hazard some unpleasant remarks to the driver on the qualities of the horse.

"Deed, sir—it's the verra truth—she's no canny to drive," said the man, as he gave a violent jerk to the right rein, not however before the near wheel had grazed the paint from a gig wheel coming in the opposite direction, and had thereby brought down a volley of good round northern abuse from the persons in the vehicle.

"I say, you know," exclaimed Fribbles, holding hard by the rail, "that horse ain't fit to go a journey—I never saw such a brute!"

"Hallo! my man," cried Brixey, seriously alarmed and clutching nervously at the back rail with both hands, "This will not do—Eh, Captain? this will not do!"

"Now, you sir, what are you after?" bawled the latter gentleman, turning round savagely—"Can't you keep that infernal brute's head straight?" The dogs too seemed roused to a sense of their danger and commenced barking furiously, which did not contribute to the serenity of their fellow travellers.

The horse still continued boring on, endeavouring always to look round at the load behind him, and it was not until they turned off from the great road, and found the objects they encountered to be few and far between, that the gentlemen became in some degree reconciled to the animal's eccentricities—not that they were able to enjoy the beauty of the Findhorn scenery, which is scarcely to be equalled in any part of Scotland. They passed the romantic woods of Altyre without observing them; the occasional glimpses they got of the dark torrent boiling and foaming in the deep gorge, some hundred feet below the road, served only to encrease their apprehension. Fribbles was much too frightened even to inquire what those long-necked, long-

legged birds were which he saw flying lazily about, or perched on the tall fir trees on the Darnaway bank of the river; and under circumstances less appalling, Brixey would have wished to satisfy his mind how it came to pass that the serious heron and the jovial rook should have so fraternised in this spot as to become settlers together in the same colony

After travelling some miles, they left the banks of the Findhorn and the lovely woods of birch and fir with which they are fringed, and entered upon a wide expanse of moor land; they could see the road winding for miles before them like a light-coloured ribbon on a dark ground. Deep black patches in the heather-covered bog showed where the peat had been cut, to form those melancholy looking stacks which harmonise so well with the wretched donkey in the foreground, who is cautiously picking his way across the quaking swamp, with a load of the precious fuel on his back. Every now and then an old cock grouse, startled from the roadside where he had been dusting himself, flew off with merry crow to a hillock, not more than a dozen yards away, and his red crest might be distinguished by a practised eye amid the purple heather.

"There's jukes!" exclaimed the driver, who had been much interested in the occasional observations made by the Captain to Brixey on sporting topics. "It's jukes!" he repeated, standing up so as to command a better view of a small turn of the road at about a hundred yards distance.

"Who is jukes?" asked Fribbles much excited. "Where is he?"

"By Jove," cried the Captain, "it will be the easiest thing in the world to stalk them—seven—eight flappers, and the old ones!"

"But do tell us," demanded Fribbles, anxiously, "who is this jukes, and what are flappers?"

"Hold hard!" was the Captain's reply. "I shall go and have a shot at them. I shall be safe to bag some of them!"

We do not assert that the younger of our two sportsmen, perhaps the elder as well, might not have entertained some vague idea of the said jukes being captain of the said flappers—who, in the Scotch language, might be highwaymen.

The driver, who entered heartily into Captain Downey's views, pulled up at once, and putting the reins into Fribbles's hands, almost before the latter was aware of his intention, jumped down, and was assisting the Captain in extracting his gun from the case.

"Eh? Why?" said Brixey; "I fancied the guns were all to come on with the other cart, by-and-bye."

"To say the truth," replied the Captain, "I make a point of never losing sight of my gun—so, you see, I just shoved it in here; just mind the dogs, will you?" he continued, as he was loading. "Take care they don't jump out. Devilish lucky, wasn't it, I happened to have my gun? I won't keep you ten minutes."

"Hallo! you!—driver!—where are you off to? I say you are not going to leave the horse?" shouted Fribbles, backed by Brixey; at both of whom the Captain, as he moved off rapidly, levelled a few uncomfortable wishes for making such a row.

The driver must have been deaf—quite—for instead of paying any attention to the remonstrances of the two gentlemen in charge of the dog-cart, he whispered a few words to the Captain; and then leaving the latter to creep round in the best manner he could to one end of the pool

without being seen, and to kneel down in the heather, he went towards the other, moving cautiously onwards in a direction away from the jukes or ducks, and showing himself as soon as he had put the birds between him and the gun.

This well-known trick answered perfectly, the old birds, followed by the young ones, about three parts grown (which our friends did not recognise under the name of flappers), swimming in a line behind them, made slowly for Downey's *cache*. The latter was waiting only till they came within easy range to give him a fair double shot, when to his indignation and disgust, a cheerful "bow, wow, wow," scared the old birds, and scattered the brood in all directions. There was a plunge into the water, and that light-hearted dog, Ponto, was duck-hunting on his own account, half wading, half swimming, dashing now after one, now after another, while the parents were wheeling round, out of shot, and inviting their young family to seek refuge in some sedgy covert at the extremity of the tarn.

We will not attempt to record all that Captain Downey said verbally, or "ejaculated mentally," at this unlooked for interruption of his sport. Twice he had the gun at his shoulder, covering the reckless Ponto, who in happy ignorance was splashing about in the reeds, and testifying his delight at the fun by a continued barking; but twice the finger of Prudence was on the trigger of Destruction, and seeing that the birds were now quite unapproachable from the boggy nature of the ground, or, at all events, that they could only be got at with the risk of a wetting, the baffled Captain strode off sulkily in the direction of the carriage. He had not proceeded many paces when the exclamations, "Woh! Woh! Hoy! Hallo! Help! Woh-oh!" met his ear. Two or three strides up a slight rise

in the ground brought him within sight of the road, just in time for him to see the dog-cart moving off at a quick rate, Fribbles hauling hard at the reins, and Brixey standing up behind, and leaning over the front seat, shouting with all his might, "Hoy! Hoy! we can't stop him,—woh-oh-oh! He's run away with us!"

These signals of distress grew more and more faint as the horse continued his career. The Captain, now joined by the horror-stricken driver, watched the vehicle as it became less and less in the distance, and it was not till it vanished entirely behind a hill that he "realised" his situation.

"Confound you!" he said angrily to the man. "What are you standing there for? Why the devil don't you run after the cart, and bring it back? It is all your fault."

"The fault is wi' your ainsel!" retorted the driver, his own love of sport causing him to misunderstand the cause of the Captain's indignation. "What for did ye no pit off the gun—an' the jukes so handy? Oh, it was beautiful; an' now we'll just hae to walk to Speytown."

"Walk to Speytown, be hanged," replied Downey; "those fellows will never keep that brute of a horse in the road. Be off with you, and catch them before they get upset. The devil take you, you mongrel," added he, addressing himself to the unconscious Ponto, who now came up wagging his tail with pleasure, and shaking a shower of dirty water liberally all round him.

"The deil tak yoursel!" exclaimed the driver sharply, for he applied the Captain's words to himself. "I'm thinking he'll no fash himsel wi' the likes o' me, when you are to the fore!" saying which, he set off at a good run after the cart, leaving Downey and Ponto to take their own line. They were five miles from Speytown.

Can't you make him stop, Peter?" asked Brixey, nervously, after they had gone some distance, and the pace had relapsed into a sober trot. "Don't you think if you were to pull the reins harder he would stop? I don't think he is running away now, because he is only trotting. Woh! woh! woh!"

"It ain't a bit of good pulling, my arm is almost broken by tugging at the beast," answered Fribbles, who had now established himself in the driver's seat, and was endeavouring to put in practice the lesson he had been carefully studying on the road. "As to talking English to him, it's no use, he doesn't understand a word. I wonder what the Scotch is for Woh!"

Onward went the horse, boring continually to the left, and only induced to keep the middle of the road by the dead pull kept upon him by Fribbles.

"He is never going to stop, I think," said the latter, after they had gone another mile or so; "if we don't meet anything, you know, why, we may get on very well——"

"Get on, yes, but where to, I wonder?" exclaimed Brixey, by no means pacified by his friend's expression of opinion; "he must stop somewhere, at last, but where? He will go wherever he chooses, there is no guiding him, and if he should take the wrong road? I wish Captain Downey had not been so imprudent——"

"Dash it! I think it was rather a sporting thing of Downey's. I should like to have had a pop at those fellows myself. It's that scoundrel of a driver who is to blame. Hang'd if I don't write to his master," said Fribbles, giving a fresh tug at the right rein. "You saw Downey, didn't you, in the road, so he is all safe." (Fribbles had not dared to look back himself.) "What a

way he will be in! If ever we get to this Speytown—I hope the streets are not narrow. I say, only fancy if it should be market day, and there are lots of carts and things to pass, and very likely indeed there'll be a brass band, or the acrobats with a drum and the panpipes."

"Good gracious me! Yes, very true, if the streets should be crowded!" cried Brixey, getting more alarmed.

"I say, Brixey, did you ever drive?"

"No, Peter—that is, only a small pony, many years ago, in a very low four-wheeler."

"Well, don't you think you could climb over here, and take the reins? Anybody who has driven a pony can drive a horse, it's the same thing exactly."

Brixey handsomely declined taking from his young friend the credit of extricating them from their perilous situation.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Fribbles, "what is the brute going to do now? Woh! ho! gently!" It seemed as if the horse, disgusted at the continued check upon his energies, had resolved suddenly upon adopting a new line of proceeding. After making two or three fancy figures, cross the road and back again, down the middle, right and left, and so on, he came to a stand still directly across the road, *in utrumque paratus*—ready to return to Morayburgh, or to proceed towards Speytown, according to circumstances.

"Very disagreeable this," said Brixey. "He seems determined to have his own way. Don't you think if I was to get down, and try to lead him straight, he would go on?"

"No; you hold the reins, and I will get down," replied Fribbles, rising and proffering the reins to his friend who was still standing up behind, "it will be boring you, to get down."

"Oh! not at all, not at all," returned the other, climbing

carefully down; it was a gymnastic to which he was quite unused; "Gently! gently! Woh—oh! horse!" he said, in caressing tones to the animal, who no sooner felt him touch the reins than he began tossing his head and showing symptoms of gibbing.

"Oh! don't touch him; pray let him be; I shall try and get down too, if you will stand at his head!"

It was too late; before the youth could resolve on what to do, away started the horse along the road they had been following towards Speytown, regardless of the cries of Fribbles, and the curious manœuvres of Brixey to stop him. Having thus disposed of the heavier portion of his load, it probably occurred to the horse that he might as well push on to his feed and his stall, wherever they might be, so he continued a steady trot, and meeting nothing to run against, stopped of his own accord, and to Fribbles's intense delight, at the door of the inn in Speytown. Brixey was left about three miles behind; there was nothing left for him but to foot it, and he would have enjoyed the walk but for his apprehensions for the safety of his young friend.

Not so Captain Downey. The having five miles of high road to do on foot was not at all to his taste—as to any uneasiness on the score of danger happening to his companions, if such a thought entered his head, the wish was father to it—nay, he would have compounded for any accident accruing to them, if it insured his own ease.

Having relieved his mind—let off the steam—by swearing at Ponto, who by a strange perversity seemed to attach himself the more closely in proportion to the quantity of savage words hurled at him; the Captain threw the gun over his shoulder and started off at a good pace, not without hoping in each new vista of the road to catch sight of the dog-cart.

His temper was by no means improved by his being shortly overtaken by a mail phaeton, which he not inaptly took to contain a party of men going to some neighbouring moor. It was natural enough that they should look with some surprise at a person, having the exterior of a gentleman, out with gun and dog the day before the season commenced. If, however, the inmates of the carriage looked unpleasantly at him, he returned their gaze with interest, scowling angrily at them in defiance, as it were. But he had nobody to vent his feelings upon except poor Ponto, who again came in for some cruel denunciations, accompanied with such demonstrations of vengeance, that he not unwisely resolved to part company, and seeing a likely bit of heather lying handy to the road, he disported himself then and there to his heart's desire, beating the ground in the most discursive style, and varying the sport by an occasional burst after a sheep.

Here was another aggravation to Captain Downey. It was many a day since he had even seen a grouse. There they were—lots of them—almost within shot of the road; perhaps, too, the ground belonged to those confounded fellows who looked so hard at him just now; it would serve them right to spoil a pack or two. But the voice of Caution, in oriental parlance, whispered in the ear of Irresolution. He refrained; and luckily he did so; for, at a turn of the road, he found himself confronted by a tall, broad-shouldered, velveteen-coated, leather-leggined individual, who had just come off the moor, accompanied by two brace of setters in couples, to which he had been giving an airing.

This very unmistakeable type of an English keeper did not seem disposed to allow the Captain to pass him

unquestioned. Placing himself in the middle of the road, right in the way of the latter, he touched his hat somewhat saucily, and said, "I beg your pardon, sir, but pr'aps you'll be able to tell me what day of the month this here is. *I* thought it was Toosday, the eleventh of Horgust, when I got up this morning, but forgetting to look at my Halmanack, maybe I'm wrong."

"Oh, nonsense! my good fellow! Tell me, have you seen a dog-cart go by with two gentlemen in it? You must have met them, I think?"

"Well," answered the keeper, "my opinion is that it went by here about the twenty-ninth of February come next leap-year."

"Come now, let us have none of your chaff," said the Captain angrily. "I suppose," he continued, "you are the keeper here. Well. I take it one may walk in the high road, even with a gun, without being stopped, eh? No law against that."

"Well—I'm darned if you ain't the cheekiest hand that ever I come across," retorted the keeper; "with that blessed dog o' yourn a hunting all along the road side."

"It is not my dog!" interrupted the Captain.

"If that don't beat all, I'm blow'd," said the man, as Ponto bounded into the road not far from where they were standing, panting, with his tongue hanging out, and his tail all at once ignominiously tucked between his legs. Ponto was a wary dog. As soon as he caught sight of the keeper, he had an intuitive perception of having been trespassing. The dog-whip in the keeper's hand attracted his eye at once; and though he longed to interchange civilities with the team of dogs clustered round their master, he preferred sitting on his tail at some distance.

"So that there dog ain't your'n; then just lend us your

gun a minute. Dang un! I'll teach un to go a poaching on ground as I has to look arter."

"The dog is not mine, and I am not going to lend you my gun," said Downey boldly. "There, make the best of that!"

"Well then, if so be it ain't a putting you to ill-convenience, I'll trouble you first for a sight of your certificate. Here is mine—William Block, gamekeeper to Sir Arry Guntur, Lochandorroch—all reglar."

And now Captain Downey blessed his good star that he had, after much argument with himself *pro* and *con*, whether or not he should go to the expense of a certificate, decided on taking one out before he left town. He might have foreseen the possibility of there arising some pressing necessity for taking this step. Howbeit, it was a sight to to see the calm dignified air with which he produced his pocket-book; and how, after slowly searching the different compartments, he drew forth the required document, and handed it to the eager keeper.

"I will gratify your curiosity, my friend," he said quietly, "though you have no sort of right to demand my certificate. Well, are you satisfied now?"

"Not afore I've took down the name, I ain't," replied the man, after he had examined the paper and found it in order.

"And I intend to take yours too, and your master's as well—Sir Harry Gunter you said, I think—Loch an Dorroch," said the Captain, making a memorandum with a pencil on a leaf of the pocket-book, "when you have written down my name——"

"Dang it!" exclaimed William Block, after diving into all his pockets, and emptying their various contents into his hand, "if I ain't gone and forgot my writing tackle. You'll lend us yourn, Capt'n?"

"Excuse me, my friend," answered Downey civilly, "I do not think I am bound to furnish pencils to game-keepers."

"Well, you *are* a deep un—*you* are. Captain Downey, of Bury Street, St. James's, London—Captain Downey, of Bury Street, St. James's, London," he repeated. "My mem'ry is a precious bad un, but I think I won't forget it. But where are you a living about here?" he continued, as the Captain was restoring the certificate to its place in his pocket-book.

"I am merely travelling—only a passing traveller," replied Downey; "but you need not trouble yourself, my good fellow, about my name. I shall write at once to your master, to complain of your conduct. I have the honour of being known to Sir Harry. Is he come North yet? If he is, I shall probably ride over in the morning from Speytown, to shake hands with him before he goes out shooting."

"Well, sir, you know, sir, a man must do his dooty," said the poor keeper, with sudden humility, quite taken aback by the cool manner of the Captain. "I ax your pardon if I've been too free; but when I see that there tarnation dog a-beating all the ground, it *was* aggrawating; and beside, sir—Capt'n, that is—if it's not saying too much, the gun did look rayther—rayther rum."

"If you look at the gun," returned Downey, "you will see it has not been discharged. The fact is, I got down from the carriage, which has gone on with my two friends—I am sadly afraid, by-the-bye, the horse has run away with them—to try and get a shot at a peregrine falcon. That infernal brute there—he belongs to my friend, Mr. Brixey—broke away, and spoiled my shot. I should like to have potted that peregrine for you. I hate the sight of the vermin."

"Well, Sir, I'm sure I wish you had shot him, with all

my heart I do. I thought there warn't one of the varmint left."

"When did you say Sir Harry was expected down?"

"There was a letter come from him as yesterday, Capt'n, to send the carriage for him to Carr Bridge on Saturday. But, sir—Capt'n, I mean—I hope you won't name anything to him. I'm sure I am very sorry."

"Sorry!" said Downey, interrupting him. "No reason to be sorry. I like to see a man do his duty. I would discharge a keeper of mine if he did not act exactly as you have done. You may depend upon it, the first time I see Sir Harry I will mention this to your credit. And now I must wish you good morning. Stay, here's a trifle to drink my health."

Mr. William Block pocketed the half-crown tendered him by the Captain, with grateful thanks and excuses. The latter gentleman, pleased with himself for having so readily got out of a scrape which threatened to compromise him, walked on in better spirits, and arrived in about an hour at Speytown, where he found his friends and a good dinner awaiting him.

Ponto, after giving the keeper a wide berth, followed meekly in the wake of the Captain, and was shut up presently with his less energetic comrade, Blazer.

## CHAPTER XXII.

A soft day—Brixey's sentiments about a kilt—First blood—The arrival at Tommiebeg Park—First impressions—Not so bad, after all!

"WHAT sort of weather is it?" asked Brixey of the waiter who had brought him his hot water early on the eventful morning of the twelfth of August, and was now drawing aside the window-curtains.

"It 's a saft day," was the reply.

"That is well," said Brixey, unfastening the night-cap which was tied under his chin. "Nothing like a soft, genial day. Are the gentlemen, my friends, stirring yet?"

"What 's your wull?" demanded the waiter, as he completed the operation he was engaged in, and turned towards the bed, where Brixey was rubbing his eyes and staring hard at the window. "What 's your wull?" he repeated.

"Oh! I asked if my friends were up yet. But eh?—why surely it is raining! You said just now it was a fine day."

"It 's no so bad. There 's just a must on the hull; but I 'm thinking it 's no for rain the day. Ye 'll be for the shooting at Tommiebeg?"

"Shooting? Oh yes, of course. Tell the gentlemen I shall be ready for breakfast in half-an-hour." And on the man leaving the room, Brixey jumped hastily out of bed and went straight to the window.

A black, dreary prospect presented itself to his eyes. A dense fog brooded over the wide open space in which the inn was situated,—so dense as nearly to shut out the houses on the opposite side. Everything looked damp and dismal; but to his surprise the people seemed to be moving about perfectly careless of the weather—not an umbrella, not a mackintosh in sight.

"So, this is what is called a soft day in these parts!" was his soliloquy. "I should be glad to know what they call a bad one. Shooting is quite out of the question, I foresee: no one in their senses would think of going out in such weather. Thank goodness, we shall have a comfortable house over our heads at Tommiebeg. I shall amuse myself in helping to arrange the furniture; there will be plenty to do to make us feel at home." So he dressed himself, and having packed his things, so as to be in readiness for an early start, he joined the Captain and Fribbles in the breakfast-room.

To his amazement he found both these gentlemen equipped for shooting—the Captain busily employed in filling the powder-flasks and shot-belts, and Fribbles, who was looking chilly and ill at his ease in a wretchedly-constructed kilt of bright-coloured flimsy tartan, engaged in watching this, to him, unaccustomed process.

"Why! Eh?" cried Brixey, after the salutations of the day had been exchanged. "You are surely not thinking of shooting to-day! You will catch your death, Peter, in that absurd dress of yours; you surely cannot be going out of doors in that gew-gaw garment, with your poor legs all bare."

"I should think I was, though," answered the youth, angry at the very contemptuous designation applied to the equipment in which he took especial pride and pleasure.

"Why shouldn't I? Downey says it's a first-rate day for Scotland; and as to my dress, why Downey says it's quite the right thing up here on the moors."

"Well, well, Peter," replied Brixey, "there's no accounting for taste; only, really—I—upon my life, I don't think, do you know, that short petticoat of yours is quite decent. I think it might be a foot or two longer, with advantage; but if *you* like it——"

"I *do* like it, and what is more, I mean to wear it," said Fribbles, waxing more and more wrath. "Why it was only this moment Downey was wishing he had got a kilt to wear."

"But surely, Peter, if I were in your place, I should feel ashamed to meet—any respectable females—without my trousers."

"Well, I call that an unfounded and illiberal prejudice," retorted the youth; "that's what *I* call it—if the respectable females don't like it, they may look another way. I know it's uncommon comfortable," continued he, while his teeth chattered with cold."

"If the dress had been made of a stouter material," Downey put in, "it would have been all the better. I am afraid that stuff is rather thin for a day like this; but there is nothing like trying. The kilt is the best walking dress possible, and believe me we shall not risk meeting many ladies in our road."

"Anything for a quiet life," said Brixey. "As long as you do not oblige me to go about without my trousers, I do not care. I shall not shoot to-day, but you will do as you please; and now let us go to breakfast, and be off as soon as we can."

The meal was quickly disposed of; and while the day was yet young, they found themselves inconveniently packed

in a rough-going trap on four wheels, denominated Phayton in the bill, and on the road to Tommiebeg.

Everything is relative. In any other country the very aspect of the day would have damped the energies of its inhabitants; a cold raw mist floated in the atmosphere, bidding defiance to the most approved inventions of Macintosh and Cording, and setting at nought patent umbrellas, pocket Siphonias, and Inverness capes—all of which admirable discoveries of modern science are good and efficient enough against an honest, down-pouring rain—all very well when it rains "cats and dogs"; but the method of keeping out the gently insinuating damp of a Scotch mist, of steering balloons against the wind, of squaring the circle, and of concocting a faultless Budget, are problems yet to be worked out.

On the Southron this sort of weather always has an uncomfortable spirit-lowering effect; he feels limp and dank as seaweed—while the Highlander takes it all as a matter of course. It is what he calls affectionately a "soft day." Downey's ardour began to cool, Fribbles's spirits began to evaporate, and Brixey's anticipations of comfort became less keen under the influence of this depressing atmosphere; and when at length the mist did leave the valley and roll away sullenly to the mountains, enveloping them nearly to their base, and casting a deep shadow over the lower slopes, it tended in no way to the exhilaration of the party.

Oh! for a gleam of sunshine to light up those beautiful fir woods on the right-bank of the river, over which a curtain of vapour is now hanging—to gladden those frowning hills on the opposite side—to give colour and light, and shade and form, too, to the different distances which are now all massed together in one sombre neutral tint.

"How black that heath does look," exclaimed Fribbles,

after they had gone some miles. "I never saw such a miserable country. I shan't be sorry, for one, when we get to the park gates. How far is it to the park, driver?"

"Yon's the park," replied the man, pointing with his whip in the direction of a rude enclosure on the hill side on the right of the high road.

"Where?" asked Brixey; "I confess I do not see anything like a park. How far is it to Tommiebeg?"

"Tommiebeg?"

"Yes, Tommiebeg."

"Tommiebeg's a' roun aboot! It's a' Tommiebeg," returned the man; "an' yon's the lodge—yon house is the lodge!"

"Bless me!" exclaimed Brixey, "you must have made a mistake."

"*That* the lodge, indeed! Oh, yes, I dare say," said Fribbles, in a tone of contempt; "we are not so green as that, you know."

The house to which the regards of all the party were now turned, was a rude-looking square building of rough unpointed masonry, about a quarter of a mile from the road, round which a low wall of stones, picked off the surface, and piled up one upon the other, formed an irregularly shaped enclosure. So desolate was the spot, especially when seen under such unfavourable circumstances, that it seemed hardly possible that any one could have fixed on such a site for a dwelling; and the travellers were only awakened to the melancholy reality, of its being actually the lodge which was to be their habitation, by the carriage turning suddenly into a rough track leading towards it. A few stones seemed to have been recently tossed into some of the deepest ruts, and two or three fresh cuttings of wheels on the turf showed it to be a road leading somewhere.

It needed not any suggestion from the coachman to cause the gentlemen to alight, and a sorry figure they cut, picking their way in single file over the rough ground along which the carriage, with much difficulty, and more bad language on the part of the driver, was kept from turning over, or getting bogged.

Captain Downey said nothing; perhaps he began to fancy he had made a bad cast, but he had seen lodges before, and his expectations as to its capabilities had never been very extravagant.

Brixey and Fribbles were to all appearance bottling up their indignation; they were too overcome to speak, and onward they stalked in moody silence over the rugged track, while the poor horse was stumbling, and the carriage mercilessly jolting from one rut into another, "deeper and deeper still."

Both these gentlemen had entertained a rather elevated idea of shooting lodges in general, and of Tommiebeg in particular. If Brixey had prefigured to himself a snug gentlemanly shooting box, "with all modern conveniences," as the advertisement had it, Fribbles had allowed his fancy to run riot about it. His first impression, and he had never dismissed the idea—he had rather dwelt upon it as a reality—was that the lodge (so called) of Tommiebeg, which he knew to be "situated in an extensive park"—the advertisement said so—was something in the Camberwell Gothic, or the Decorated Brixton style of architecture. He had seen park lodges—and it had often struck him how nice and comfortable they always appeared to be. He had decided in his mind that the ancient mansion of Tommiebeg might have been pulled down at some time, and the lodge fitted up as a residence, by the probable addition of a new drawing-room or dining-room. The park he had loved to

picture to himself. The clumps of trees judiciously dispersed; a noble avenue of elm or beech along the carriage drive leading up to the site of the old manor house; a fine sheet of water, with a swan and a boat-house to match; a herd of deer (out of which they were by agreement allowed to shoot ten head), scattered about in groups, cropping the tender herbage, or reposing in the leafy covert.

The re-action was too violent, it shut him up altogether.

Brixey, too, had become familiarised with the idea of the beauty of the forest scenery of Corriewhiskie and Glenfoulachin—his dream by night, and his vision by day, had often been of cool glades and delicious bivouacs on the velvet turf, after the fatigue and excitement of shooting grouse or stalking deer. As to the house they were to inhabit, he had not troubled himself at all about its probable architectural embellishments, he considered it a matter of course it would be comfortable in all its appointments. His old friend M'Phun had warned him not to expect more than that, and he had even suggested the probability of his having to put up with some little inconvenience—all which he treated as part of the enjoyment of the thing—the very "roughing it," he told Brixey, would add to the zest of the adventure, and would tend, by giving variety to his manner of living, to the re-establishment of his health and spirits.

Brixey was, as we know already, of a good easy temperament; he was not easily put out; but to the best conditioned individual it is hard to be taken completely aback, to have an extinguisher clapped suddenly upon all his dearest anticipations is "hard lines," as the saying is. Brixey's heart fell, and his courage failed him altogether, when he saw how he had deceived himself; or, as he put it, how he had been deceived in the affair by others.

Captain Downey, too, began to feel that he had been

"done" somewhat; but, after all, the ground did not look unpromising to his practised eye; besides, *he* did not pay for it; there was sure to be plenty to eat and drink; and as to bed-room accommodation, he had slept in queer places at times, and was none the worse for it. Suddenly his thoughts were diverted from this channel by his observing Blazer, who with Ponto had at first appeared to participate in the disappointment and disgust of his masters, suddenly brighten up a little, and raise his tail from the downward tendency it had hitherto preserved; he saw he began to look up wind. Fribbles, who was plodding on behind Downey, was roused from his meditations by the latter suddenly calling out to him to lay hold of Ponto who luckily had a collar on, through which Downey had slipped his handkerchief, and now gave it to Fribbles to hold. In the meantime he had got his gun from the carriage, and Fribbles not knowing what was going to happen next, saw him move quietly off the track, and follow Blazer, who now began to exhibit some little enterprise, and was slowly and cautiously stealing up to windward. The youth watched the dog anxiously; he saw him stop as though smitten with a fit, and he was on the point of expressing an opinon to that effect, when whir-r-r, rose a fine pack of grouse—bang! bang! went the Captain's two barrels, and the two old birds were lying on their backs on the heather.

"First blood!" cried Downey, picking up the game. "You saw how I took the two old birds. It wasn't a bad shot that second barrel. The pack will come to hand easily enough now, but they are rather small yet. We shall have some grouse soup to-day, anyhow!"

All this passed so rapidly that Fribbles had hardly time to recover from his dumbfoundered state. Brixey now came

up, and expressed his admiration of the feat. This little episode was lucky, since it had the effect of taking the edge off the disappointment and discomfort of the trio, inclining them to see things through a pleasanter medium than heretofore.

They were presently joined by a stout, active young fellow, who came from the direction of the lodge. Doffing his bonnet to the party, he took the birds from the Captain, and relieved Fribbles of Ponto, who had been ever since the discharge of the gun in an unpleasant state of excitement. He did this as though it had been part of his duty.

"And who may you be, pray?" asked Brixey.

"Just Sandy Grant, the keeper, at your service," replied the man, respectfully.

"Sandy Grant. True, I remember Mr. M'Snail mentioning your name. I suppose we shall find him at the house."

"Just that," replied the man, and as he spoke the factor himself came to give them the meeting. They walked all together towards the building; which, the nearer it was approached, looked more forlorn and forbidding, resembling rather an out-house than a dwelling.

"So, Mr. M'Snail," said Brixey, pointing with his umbrella to the house, "this is the lodge, with all modern conveniences is it? A pretty sort of place to put up in for some months. I have been deceived, sir; grossly deceived. It is an imposture, sir! You don't suppose, sir, anybody would be so silly as to give a large sum of money—a high rent, sir, for such a wretched cabin as this?"

While Brixey was thus indulging himself with the luxury of a good fit of grumbling; opening the safety valve, as it were, of his pent-up grievances, Evan contented himself

with the slightest possible manifestations of feeling. An occasional "Ech, sir!" or, "'Deed it's no that," accompanied by a deprecatory bow, was his only reply.

Fribbles here put in a word. "And where is the extensive park, I should like to know," he asked; "the extensive park, in which that lying advertisement said the lodge was situated?"

"Eh! sure. There's the park. Yon's the dyke a' round it!"

"You seem to have been under a wrong impression," suggested the Captain to Fribbles, "about the meaning of the word park, which in this country has a very different signification to the one we give it in the south. Here a park is simply a field, or ground inclosed in a fence. This is a Scotch park, sure enough, though the fences have been but indifferently kept up."

"I say it's a humbug altogether!" exclaimed Fribbles. "I never saw such a dog-kennel of a place," he continued, as they approached nearer to the house.

Mr. M'Snail very probably had anticipated some such outbreak; for, as we have said, he expressed no sort of surprise at the comments made upon the place. He, however, took up the remark about the kennel.

"Oh! there's a fine kennel," said he, "at the backside o' the lodge. It was built by the baronet from England, Sir Tydley Wynke. Eh! it's a fine kennel!"

"Well, then, all I can say is," replied Fribbles, "that Blazer and Ponto are likely to be a good deal better off for lodging than their masters."

They now entered the house, preceded by Mr. M'Snail, who introduced them into what he called the living-room. Two stout, bare-footed lassies were busy in dusting and setting to rights the different articles of furniture which had

been recently unpacked from two carts now standing before the front door.

"I did not expect ye so airly," said Evan. "The house is no just in a state to be seen; but it will a' be ready soon."

The sleeping apartments were then visited, into each of which the furniture belonging to it had been hastily put. The rooms were small, but there was one for each of the party, and the furniture appeared to be fairly good of its kind. Captain Downey was invited to take his choice, and he naturally suffered himself—as a visitor, of course—to be established in the best room. Fribbles's gun was then unpacked, and after that aspiring youth had been inspected by the Captain, who suggested a variety of alterations in the stowage of the powder-flask, shot-belt, wadding, and caps, the two started off, attended by Sandy Grant and the dogs, for a walk across the moor.

Brixey gave himself up to the work of arranging the furniture with the utmost alacrity and good-will. He seemed to be in all places at once: now in conference with Mr. M'Snail, who acted as commander-in-chief; now running through the bed-rooms, putting a chest of drawers straight in one, altering the disposal of a chair in another; now dropping into the kitchen, and helping Maggie, the cook, to arrange the plates and dishes on the shelves; now lending a hand to assist Duncan, a stout lad of about eighteen years of age, who was to be their man of all work, in carrying a heavy portmanteau to its destination. He thus worked off his cares, and in the process won golden opinions from all the household by his kindly ways and cheerfulness. His activity and good-humour, in fact, increased the good will and energy of everybody to such an extent, that in an incredibly short time the house really began to have a comfortable home-like look about it.

He did not cease his labours till the preparations in the kitchen for dinner were in a forward state. He next proceeded to unpack all his own effects, which had arrived at the lodge the evening before; he put his gun in the gun-rack, and hung up his shot-belts on pegs arranged for that purpose in the sitting-room; and then having made himself comfortable, he threw himself into a chair on one side of the cheery peat fire on the hearth. Mr. M'Snail disposed himself in another opposite him, and they indulged together in a cozy cigar.

Brixey came to the conclusion, that things were not so bad, after all.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

A word on modern sports—With and without dogs—Fribbles nearly fills the bag with his first shot—He becomes a first-rate performer, by keeping his head cool—Death of a snipe, and who went in for it.

He must be a very unimpressionable being who does not look back to his first day's grouse-shooting with pleasurable feelings. Although he may have had the good fortune to participate in the very best of partridge-shooting in the strictly preserved manors of the south, how tame it will now appear to him in comparison with the free range over the hills in Scotland—how insipid the plodding backwards and forwards, up and down stubbles and turnips in pursuit of birds that have been counted over and over again by the keeper, who prides himself on being able to tell you exactly how many coveys are due in this or that field, and when they are flushed, can certify almost the very flight they will take, and the spot where they may be hit upon again.

In these days, too, when the use of dogs is becoming obsolete; when the shooters, each with a pair of guns and a loader, are marshalled in line, a beater between each man, and the marching, and countermarching, and wheeling, and pivoting are performed with the precision of military drill; when the official return of the killed (we will say nothing about the wounded) is made a paragraph for the county paper, or figures prominently in the columns of the 'Field,' or 'Bell's Life,' it is rather like waging war

against the poor hares and partridges—it may scarcely with propriety be called sport, at least according to the old acceptation of the word.

There is pleasure, we admit, in shooting *with dogs* in an enclosed country, but to the true sportsman more than half that pleasure consists in watching the marvellous instinct of the animal, dog. How carefully he takes the wind! how regularly and scientifically he quarters his ground! how stealthily he works up to the point! and then how graceful, how expressive his attitude! How uneasily he looks back, scarcely daring to move his head, to observe whether you are aware of his successful find! There is an almost imperceptible quiver of the tail, as if he could not control his impatience. See him again come unexpectedly upon game—he drops suddenly in his seemingly headlong career, as if he were shot. And his companion, has he found too? No; he is only backing the other dog. How steady he stands! how anxious his look! how speaking that eye! The covey rises, they see a bird fall to each barrel, but they are patiently sitting down; if they stir, the words "Down charge!" reminds them they must wait till the gun is reloaded.

We must now rejoin our sportsmen, Captain Downey and Fribbles.

We make no secret of it; this was the first time the latter of these gentlemen had been "out shooting," and as may be anticipated, he had many difficulties to encounter, and many strange things to learn in this, his initiation into the mysteries of gunnery. He was not unaware that one of the first essentials is the loading—he had seen Downey go through the process with the quickness given by long practice. It looked easy enough, and Fribbles was quite certain of the routine of the thing—

the powder first, then the wadding, next the shot, another pellet, and last of all the cap.

A circumstance that contributed not a little to render him nervous, was the fact of his having recently carefully studied all the works of art to which he could obtain access having any relation to the sports of the field, and he had acquired the knowledge that even experienced sportsmen are liable to make grave errors. He recalled at this juncture to his recollection an admirable picture by Policinello, of the celebrated Mr. Briggs, who not liking to run the risk of letting any one else load for him, *for fear of accidents*, had determined on doing it himself; how the keeper, apprehensive of his having made some mistake, takes the gun from him, and is represented as measuring, with two hands breadth on the ramrod above the muzzle, the amount of the charge. The expression on the face of the latter is indicative of surprise, while that of Mr. Briggs betrays a consciousness of something being not quite as it should be.

Fribbles had also read with intense interest, in a work of some authority, how another well-known sportsman, named Winkle, goes out with a party on the First of September, and is guilty of certain eccentricities which draw down upon him some unpleasant criticisms from an old friend of his, one Mr. Pickwick. This, he remembered related more especially to a peculiar fashion adopted by Mr. Winkle in carrying his gun.

It was obvious to him from these historical facts that it would require much caution on his part in order not to commit himself; however, anything he thought preferable to exposing his ignorance by asking for information on any point which he presumed he ought to know; and although he had never understood the proverb "ce n'est que le premier

pas qui coute" (by reason of his ignorance of the language), he was quite aware of the value of putting on a bold front—so he stopped to load.

The mechanism of the powder-flask is simple enough, when one knows how to apply it. If ever Fribbles had studied it, he forgot all about it in his present nervous state, and instead of cutting off the powder secundum artem, he pulled back the spring and poured what he took to be a sufficient charge into each barrel. On ramming down the wadding he discovered that there was a considerable difference in the quantity of powder in the two—he could not help that—it did not much signify, he thought—it would make the gun kill further—he then betook himself to the shot-pouch. Here, too, he was again at fault, and after spilling some charges of shot in the vain endeavour to remember the principle of the thing, he ended by dropping into the barrels what in algebra would be represented by the letter X, an unknown quantity, on which he rammed the respective wads. In putting on the caps he put the hammer at full cock, and let it so remain, for the simple reason that he had not sufficient confidence in himself to meddle any more with the trigger. With the gun over his shoulder he now hastened forward to join Downey and the keeper, who were settling the line of beat for the day.

"I hope," said the Captain to Fribbles, when he came up, "you do not make a practice of carrying your gun at full cock?"

Oh no! certainly not!" replied the latter carelessly; "it is all right enough."

"Pardon me," rejoined Downey, "I fancy you must have forgotten—it is at full cock at this moment."

Fribbles affected some surprise and, with the muzzle

pointed about the level of Downey's ear, proceeded to manipulate the trigger. The latter had hardly time to duck his head, which he did instinctively, when a tremendous explosion was heard; the gun had gone off, and Fribbles, knocked over by the severe recoil, was stretched on the ground; the second barrel going off as he fell, the charge just missed the keeper's legs.

"You have nearly bagged more than you could carry home!" exclaimed Downey angrily to the wretched youth, who lay at full length on the heather, feeling convinced he was a dying man. He had received a hard blow on the chest by the recoil of the first barrel, and the second had made his arm tingle in such sort as to give him the idea it was blown all to pieces, at least.

"Why the devil don't you get up?" continued the Captain. "You are not going to lie there all day—you're not hurt, are you?"

"The gentleman's gun, I'm thinking," said the keeper with a grin, as he picked it up, "will have gane off at baith ends."

"Get up, man!" cried Downey. "We were—Sandy Grant and I—in a devilish deal more danger than yourself. Come, get up!"

Poor Fribbles, feeling his way, as it were to ascertain what remnant of life was left him, got by slow degrees upon his legs, and then proceeded to examine himself all over—stretching out first one arm, then the other, then kicking out his legs in turn. Having at last arrived at the conclusion that he was not wounded to the death, he stood staring vacantly about him for some time, till he was roused from his stupor by a roar of laughter from Downey, in which Sandy Grant heartily joined.

"Here! take a drop of this," said the former, offering

him a flask; "take a mouthful of whiskey, and you'll be right enough. It is a lucky escape we have all had, I can tell you."

"I think there must be something the matter with that confounded gun of mine," said Fribbles, after he had followed the Captain's prescription, and felt the better for it. "There certainly is," he continued, "something wrong about the trigger."

"It's verra true," observed Sandy, with great gravity; "there was something wrang at the trigger; but if I'm no mistaken, it was your ain fingers."

Fribbles looked unutterable things at the man, who was quietly working the locks, as if to prove the fault did not lie with them.

"I think," said Downey, "it would be as well to let Sandy load for you. Give him the tackle, and when you get your nerve again you can take to it yourself."

"Will I pit ony lead intil it?" asked Sandy in a whisper of Downey, as Fribbles was busy emptying his pockets of the various articles of ammunition."

"Of course not," answered Downey; "not a grain."

As the mist still hung heavily on the hills, it was decided that they should confine themselves to the low ground, making thus a short day of it. This would give them an opportunity of trying the dogs, and would bring them back to the lodge early enough to enable them to unpack and set in order all their effects.

A wide ranging dog Ponto proved himself to be—a very wide ranging dog indeed. He soon established for himself the character given him by his late master, Mr. Joseph Higgs, of being a "high-couraged dog." No sooner was he slipped, than he was off "in all directions at once." In vain everybody halloed, and whistled and halloed again

till they were hoarse, the dog was soon out of sight, and then they devoutly hoped—at all events Downey did—that they would never see him again. Blazer, on the other hand, attached himself to the heels of Captain Downey; his instinct told him that if any fun was to be had, he must look to that gentleman for it, and not to Fribbles. To all the pressing invitations to "Hold up!" to all the signs made him to induce him to range, he paid no heed. He had no idea of doing anything of the kind. He showed himself to be a first-rate dog for following—not for leading—and the Captain soon discovered that there was nothing left for it, but to walk up their game, if they meant shooting; so placing Fribbles on his left, and Sandy on his right, they set off at a good pace over the heather.

There were plenty of birds; the Captain shot well, and had killed two or three brace before Fribbles could bring himself to fire off his gun. Having once achieved it, however (shutting his eyes the while), he went on blazing away manfully. Both Captain Downey and Sandy gave him credit for making some splendid shots, and he became at last so conceited with his success as to begin disputing with the former which of the two had knocked down a certain old cock grouse, which Blazer had put himself out of his way to puzzle out.

"All I know is," cried Fribbles, much excited, "I pointed my gun—both barrels—at the bird, and when I let it off, down he came. It's uncommon hard when a fellow makes such a good shot he should lose the credit of it."

"Come, now," said Downey, who became vexed at last with his friend's continually harping on the same subject, "I will bet you three to two, you do not hit my cap with your two barrels, at fifteen yards."

"Done!" cried Fribbles; "in half-crowns. How is it to be decided?"

"Oh! Sandy shall throw it into the air, and you may stand where you like."

"Now, then, I'm ready," said Fribbles. So Sandy having stepped the distance, tossed up Downey's cap. Bang! bang; went the youth's two barrels. He ran to pick it up, and, having carefully looked it over, confessed with a mortified air that he had missed it, laying the blame on his gun, and insinuating that other people might find it difficult to let off the gun in time.

"Well," said Downey, "I will give you three to two again, I hit your bonnet."

"Done!" exclaimed Fribbles, in great glee; and taking off his new Glengarry, he handed it to Sandy. It is needless to say it came down riddled like a sieve, having caught it from both barrels.

"Four half-crowns, I think!" said Downey, quietly. "Give them to Sandy. I make them over to him." It was not an expensive way of tipping a keeper.

"You shoot fairly, very fairly, indeed, Fribbles," the Captain continued to the discomfited youth, who was turning his tattered bonnet over and over. "You have killed some very pretty shots. I never saw a fellow take to the thing so quickly."

"Deed that's a fac," said Sandy, as he was going through the pantomime of dropping the charges of shot into Fribbles's gun. "An' it's just a beautiful gun to kill, an' the gentleman's heed well be cool the noo. It's aye gude for shooting, kiping the heed cool." Sandy was evidently a wag.

Ponto, while this unusual display of fancy shooting was going on, had made his appearance, completely blown.

He had just had a splendid run over an open country after some mountain sheep. It was a chance not to be missed, so Sandy, at the Captain's order, administered to him a good threshing with the couples, which had the effect of cooling his ardour a little, and he now thought it advisable to keep within bounds. Nay, such was the beneficial effect of this chastening, that he shortly distinguished himself by making a capital point, to the great astonishment of Fribbles, who saw him drop suddenly, and crouch low on the ground.

"I never saw such a beast of a dog," he cried. "I suppose now he is going to shut up altogether. Get up! you brute!" he roared out to the dog. "Dashed if I don't think he is going to sleep!"

"Hold your tongue, can't you? and come on quietly; he has found some birds, I tell you," whispered Downey, and as he spoke a pack of grouse got up all round them. Two fell to Downey's gun, and, at a distance of about a hundred yards, another was marked to fall. It happened that at this moment Fribbles had recovered sufficiently from the fright occasioned to him by the unexpected rise of the birds, to fire both his barrels in the very line of the third grouse as it fell. His delight was not to be told.

"There's no doubt about *that*, I think!" he said proudly. "You saw me let off my gun at that bird. It's an immense way off."

"By Jove! it's a magnificent shot!" was Downey's remark. "We must have the distance measured. Sandy, put down those birds for a moment, and step that distance. It is full a hundred yards. No one on earth could beat that!" The distance was proclaimed by Sandy to be no less than ninety-five paces. Fribbles was satisfied he had suddenly risen into eminence as a crack shot, and he

would have strutted proudly as a peacock all the rest of the day, but for an incident that occurred shortly after, which had the effect of throwing a damper over his day's enjoyment.

They had been for some time working towards the lower ground, where it became nearly a dead level. A few small pools of water were to be seen at intervals, with occasional patches of the most beautiful green turf, which contrasted brilliantly with the dark tint of the adjacent heath. Sandy informed them that in all probability they would find some snipes in this neighbourhood, and coupling up Ponto, for fear of his running wild, he led the way.

Fribbles, who had now the fullest confidence in his shooting powers, walked bravely on till he saw Sandy and the Captain begin carefully picking their way across some black, boggy-looking ground, and stepping gingerly from tussock to tussock. He there came to a halt. Presently a snipe rose before Downey, which he shot, and it fell on the lovely greensward not many paces from Fribbles. He instantly rushed to pick it up, regardless of the shouts of Sandy, warning him to keep back. No sooner had his foot touched the treacherous green than the hapless youth was floundering up to his waist in the bog.

"Bide awhile! bide awhile! dinna stir yoursel!" roared Sandy, while he leapt frantically from tuft to tuft over the space between him and the sinking Fribbles. "For Gude'-sake, dinna stir. There's no a mair unchancey bit moss in a' the country roun'."

It was with the utmost difficulty, and not without some risk of falling, himself, into the bog, that Sandy, aided by the Captain, succeeded in dragging Fribbles, almost by the hair of his head, out of the black bath in which he had been immersed. And when he did stand on *terra firma*,

he seemed to have changed his green kilted costume for a sober suit of sables, little in character with the bright crimson tie round his neck, which had escaped untarnished.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

The distinction between woods and forests in the North—Their migratory habits—Peculiarities of the Roe—Setting the house in order—The merchant.

"It is a sad pity, I think, the lodge is built in such an exposed situation," said Brixey to Mr. M'Snail, as they sat over the fire; "it would have been so easy to have chosen some pretty, sheltered spot in the forest."

"In the forest!" repeated Evan, trying hard to discover what Brixey could mean.

"Yes, in, or at all events near the forest; besides, the shelter afforded by a good thick belt or grove of trees, it would have added so much to the cheerfulness of the place. I suppose there is some fine timber—firs and larch, I suppose, principally—"

"Timber!—firs and larch! principally!" exclaimed the factor still more bewildered.

"Oak and elm, perhaps—plenty of timber of some sort, at any rate; what is the distance from this to the beginning of the wood?"

"Distance!—wood!" echoed Evan, giving tokens of extreme perplexity—"I dinna ken preceesely what ye are meaning."

"What should I mean, but the woods with the hard name, Corriewhiskie I think you call it. I think if the lodge had been built in the wood it would have been a

good deal more comfortable. Don't you agree with me Mr. M'Snail?"

"Oh aye! sure! most perfectly. I agree with you—" (Evan had not the remotest idea of Brixey's meaning).

"The woods, I suppose, are not very far off, are they?—the Corriewhiskie woods?" asked the latter.

"There's nae woods in Corriewhuskie!"

"No woods in Corriewhiskie!" exclaimed Brixey, much astonished. "Where is the forest of Corriewhiskie?"

"Eh! the *forest* of Corriewhuskie*—sure, it will be on march."

Scotch woods, we are aware, have at times taken the most extraordinary vagaries. It is beyond a doubt that, once upon a time Birnam wood did come to Dunsinane; and although this singular instance of a migratory propensity in a wood was well known to Brixey, he was nevertheless quite unprepared to hear it seriously asserted by a gentleman who had but little of the air of one given to making jokes, that the forest of Corriewhiskie was positively "on the march." He had heard of moving bogs, of floating islands, and of landslips in modern times, but of a marching forest, never—never since the days of Duncan, King of Scotland.

"Bless my heart!" he exclaimed, "the forest of Corriewhiskie on the march!"

"Eh! sure. Ye ken well that Tommiebeg marches wi' *that*, and Glenfoulachin."

More extraordinary still. Tommiebeg moving off

* Some of our readers might not unnaturally fall into the same error as our friend Brixey, if they, too, do not happen to be aware that a deer forest in the north is only a district of moor-land, from which the sheep have been removed, in order that the deer may not be disturbed. The taking off the sheep from a country is called "foresting it." It is not that the deer dislike the society of the sheep themselves, but they have a strong objection to the shepherd and his dogs, who are always moving about.

too! Brixey was completely mystified. It was some time before he was made to comprehend that the word "march" in the Scotch language means "boundary"—that Tommiebeg "marched with" or was "bounded by" the deer forests of Corriewhiskie and Glenfoulachin, and that his interpretation of the advertisement was quite erroneous. He discovered, in short, that these famous forests instead of being his—for he had understood "marching with" to mean "going with"—were in fact on another property, and that his rights did not extend beyond the shootings of Tommiebeg and Knockandoun.

"But," he said, after having with difficulty arrived at this conclusion, "but, how about these ten deer—the seven stags and the three hinds we are allowed to shoot—where are they?"

"Eh! why, ye must obsearve," answered Evan, "when the deer come over the march, ye'll no be for shuting them a'—so it's leemited to just ten; ye can shute ten; it's a grand number, ten! a verra leeberal leemitation."

"I suppose there are lots of roe deer?" asked Brixey—"there is no limitation for them."

"For the rae, as ye obsearve, there's no leemitation."

"But where are they to be found?"

"Where are they—to be found? it's no that easy to say," answered Mr. M'Snail, slowly. "Ye ken the rae deer lives in the woods, and the planting on the hull is no yet made, but it will be a fine place for rae—Oh! a principal place—when it's made."

"But your advertisement gave us to understand that the roe were plentiful!"

"Oh, aye! an' where there's woods the rae is plentiful. I'm thinking the adverteezement said, the 'rae are frequently on the ground—' ye'll no deny that fac."

"I suppose you mean roe do not fly in the air—that they remain on the ground?"

"Just that!" replied Evan; "they are mostly upon the ground; just that."

"I will just tell you my opinion, Mr. M'Snail," said Brixey, irritated at this cool assertion of the factor's. "The man that penned that lying advertisement is a rogue! a swindler, sir! I repeat it—a swindler! First of all we are taken in about the lodge and the park, then about the forest, and now about the roe. It is a gross deception from first to last. I have no doubt it will prove the same with regard to the grouse and the other game. The trout and salmon fishing as well. I dare say that is all a sham!"

Now Mr. Evan M'Snail was in truth the author of the tempting advertisement in Snowie's list; but being a man of peace, he was slow to take offence—he might have felt there was some reason for Brixey's opinions—howbeit, he pardoned the offence as soon as committed, and confined himself to the last remark.

There was a small burn within sight of the lodge, abounding in troutlings and par, which, when swollen with rain, became a very imposing stream. In the lower part of this, a little above its junction with the Spey, there was actually a pool or two, where an adventurous salmon had occasionally been killed, more probably with the spear than the rod.

Strong on this point, Evan took the high ground. "It's a truth, every word, wi' respect to the fushing," he said. "There's fine trouting in the burn ower bye,—and the warld kens there's salmon fishing *to be had* in Spey."

"Well, that is something, at any rate," replied Brixey, somewhat appeased. "I am excessively fond of fishing,

and I have a great desire to catch a salmon. I hope to do so before long."

"There's nae dout o' that," said Evan, who now began fidgetting to go, making various excuses for declining Brixey's hospitable invitation to remain to dinner with them, or at all events, to wait till his friends returned from shooting. Now this was exactly what Mr. M'Snail was particularly anxious to avoid. He had a wholesome dread of encountering Captain Downey; it was all very well fencing with Brixey, but a question from the former gentleman was likely to be a home thrust, or at least, one very difficult to parry.

Having introduced the subject of the furniture, by gentle transition, Evan came to the question of payment for a month in advance, and having received his first instalment in the shape of a cheque for the amount, he took leave of Brixey, and walked down to the high road where his gig was waiting for him.

Left alone, Brixey sat down to write to his sister. He told her how greatly he had enjoyed his voyage; of the pleasant people he had fallen in with; and extolled his good fortune in having made the acquaintance of that very nice person Captain Downey, who had so kindly given up so much in order to pass a week or ten days at Tommiebeg. He narrated also the adventure of Fribbles at the hotel in Aberdeen; and did not forget to mention his own discomfiture in the streets of that city on Sunday. He said nothing of the little disappointments he had met with, and softened down the asperities of the lodge, which he made out to be very nice and comfortable; he went on to say how much better he was already in health, and how he hoped to gain fresh strength daily by regular exercise and breathing the pure air of the mountains. He hoped she

did not miss him much; expressed his happiness in looking forward to seeing her again in a couple of months or so, sent his good wishes to the servants, and a message especially to Job, bidding him be careful in putting up the bells on the doors and windows.

He had just affixed the queen's-head to his letter, when the sportsmen returned from shooting. Anything more draggle-tailed and woe-begone than the figure presented by Fribbles, it would be impossible to imagine. The dilapidated Glengarry bonnet scarcely held together on his head; his features were piebald with patches of black mud, with which he had unconsciously smeared them; his shooting jacket stained with the dark fluid; his kilt was hanging dank and dripping on his bare legs, which for colour might have belonged to a Hottentot; while his hose heavy with wet were hanging over his ancles, and one shoe only remained faithful to him—the other had deserted him in his difficulties. He was in too abject a state to give any explanation of the causes of his mishap, and it was from the Captain that Brixey learnt the adventures of the day, and received a satisfactory report of the capabilities of the moor.

It is wonderful how the smallest objects contribute to our comfort and well-being, if we only knew how to apply them. The first appearance of a small bed-room, in a shooting-lodge, is not promising—the narrow bed, the ordinary washing apparatus, a rude chest of drawers, a small table, and perhaps a couple of *very* wooden chairs, haply a strip of carpet (but that is a luxury), make up the sum of the furniture, and the four bare whited walls look cold and cheerless.

Captain Downey was an old campaigner—in so far as carrying on the war against deer and grouse may be called campaigning—and he now showed the experience of a

veteran settler, or a sailor, in the way he instantly set about making himself comfortable in his dreary-looking room. Among the articles he had provided for the common stock at Aberdeen were a few tools,—a hammer, an axe, a saw, nails of all descriptions, one or two chisels, a pair of pincers, a pair of pliers, a turnscrew, with a couple or so of gimlets and brad-awls. His first task was to give himself the means of hanging up everything capable of being so stowed away. He had soon driven into the wall shining rows of big brass-headed nails, and on these were suspended his various shooting-coats, his dressing-gown, his shot-belts, and such like. Above the chimney (there was a chimney in the best room) his fishing-rods were disposed in order; over the table he threw a light fair-weather plaid, and the battered deal planks were at once metamorphosed into an article of furniture, as pleasing to look at as though it had been of French polished rosewood or mahogany. On this table was disposed his writing-tackle, and various cosy little etceteras, contributing to his convenience and luxury. The room was no longer the same.

That is exactly what struck Fribbles, when, after much scrubbing and much grumbling, he had dressed himself, and had come to see what Downey was about, making, as he did, such a continual hammering. He had left his own room in a hopeless state of confusion. Everything tossed about, his portmanteaus open, with half their contents tumbled out on the floor—coats and boots and shirts and ties all littered about together.

The orderly and habitable look of Downey's room was a lesson to Fribbles—the beginning of a new experience—and if we have been particular in telling of this *savoir faire*, this practical knowledge of the Captain's, it is in order to carry out the design we proposed to ourselves and confided

to the reader in an early chapter, of making this veracious history a sort of guide to the uninitiated,—a handbook to those new to Highland moor life.

There is a luxury in the feeling of having made the most of circumstances; there is a triumph in overcoming difficulties, however trifling they be,—in drawing on one's own resources for happiness, however transient its duration. We have a pleasing souvenir of having thus come out victorious in more than one encounter of this kind, where everything was against us. We were quartered, many summers ago, in a poor shealing at the head of Loch Shin. We had been trolling the whole day for *salmo ferox* in a small loch tributary to this larger one, and had finished our labours by helping to drag our small boat across from one loch to the other, which was really hard work. We arrived at our quarters nearly dead beat, and we longed for a lounging chair, as we ate our oatcake and our trout—simply cooked, but how good!—seated on a hard bench, while our companion was perched on an empty barrel turned on end.

The excitement of our meal (at the cooking of which, each of us might say, "*magna pars fui*,") once over, the bench began to get woefully hard; we wanted to lean back too—it had no dorsal fin, however.

"I say," said our chum of the angle, whom I had seen looking very miserable for some time, "this will never do. I don't know how *you* feel, but *I* cannot long preserve the perpendicular; my back is well nigh broke;" and having wriggled about for a minute or two on his barrel, as if to discover a soft place in it, he rested his elbows on his knees, and supporting his chin on his hands, he cut such a funny figure that it was impossible to help laughing; and he joined heartily in the merriment.

A brilliant thought struck us; we sent the "lad" out to gather a lot of young heather, and having stuffed this into our respective carpet-bags, we extemporised a couple of luxurious cushions, soft and springy, on the earthen floor, and turned over the despised bench for a back. Seated upon these, with our feet (as the Scotch idiom hath it) *in* the fire (Anglicè, *near* it), for it was very cold o'nights, we smoked our pipes and imbibed our toddy. We could tell a good story, by-the-bye, about that bottle of whiskey, which is more than the exciseman could do. We were supremely happy: we had the self-gratulation of not having been beat.

We remember, on another occasion, being at a shooting-lodge where there *were* chairs—straight-backed, wooden, comfortless machines. Now it is by no means conducive to a tired man's interests and enjoyments, the sitting a whole evening bolt upright, with a sort of back-board: it may be an admirable institution for a young lady at a boarding-school. The remedy suggested by our friend was simple. We possessed a saw, and by the mere application of that instrument we performed a delicate operation on the inhospitable article of furniture, by amputating an inch or an inch and a half from each of the hind legs. Let any one similarly situated, if he be sceptical as to the success of this treatment, try the experiment; our prim, stiff, old-fashioned chairs assumed at once a lounging, rakish, come-and-sit-here look, in no way inconsistent with their newly acquired character.

It required, of course, some time to organise everything in the new establishment; and here, too, Captain Downey exhibited great ability: he may be said to have fairly earned his keep. He assisted Brixey to make agreements with the servants about their wages; he brought Sandy Grant to

book, and out of the dozen big "lads" who for the first day or two seemed to board and lodge somewhere on the moor hard by, and passed their leisure time lounging in front of the house, actively occupied in doing nothing, he picked out two, recommended by Sandy to act as gillies. The larder was looked to, and regulations made for hanging up and ticketing the game. The kennel was cleansed; and by the application of two or three hours' labour, under the Captain's superintendence, a very tolerable bath was contrived by damming up a small deep pool under a fall of the burn, not a minute's walk from the door.

Snowie and Morel, of Inverness, were both written to to send forthwith stores of provision and ammunition. The butcher and baker in Speytown were to supply meat and bread on certain days in the week. A pony belonging to one of the gillies was chartered to carry the game-bags, and to give Brixey a lift occasionally whenever they took the outside beats, and had to go further from home. The carpenter, who lived "awa' east" at the *town*, was to put in hand some boxes for sending away game; and a number of small articles which were found to be wanting in the inventory furnished by Mr. M'Snail, more especially in the department of the kitchen, were to be got at "the merchant's," who also inhabited *the town*, which was about two miles from the house.

A most useful member of society, by the way, is the individual called "par excellence" *the merchant*, in the rural districts in Scotland. We have not in the south, saving perhaps at the iron-works in Wales, any shopkeeper whose stores are so varied and so heterogenous, or who is himself so completely a "Jack of all trades." There is nothing you can ask for, from parasols to powder-flasks, that he cannot furnish. Hats and bonnets, male and

female great-coats and petticoats, bottles of ink and bottles of whiskey, pens and perfumery, tapioca and tape, creels and crockery, mulls and macintoshes, pigtail and plaids, tin tacks and toasting-forks, groceries and gunpowder, cheeses and checked aprons, saucepans and soap, crinoline and cobbler's wax, tallow candles and treacle, fusees and fire-irons, mousetraps and mustard-pots, buttons and blacking, spectacles and Spanish licorice,—but it would fill a chapter to catalogue the marvellous resources of his dingy, whiskey-perfumed *penetralia*. In fact, it is almost an even bet that a weel-to-do merchant will produce for you anything you can think of, short of locomotives, gasometers and hydraulic pumps.

His shop or store is the resort of all the idle *lads* in the country, and the receptacle for all the gossip of the neighbourhood. No one, that is "a decent body," ever dreams of passing the merchant's without stopping for a dram. The quantity of whiskey consumed in this way is enormous; and no Southron would credit the amount of spirits disposed of by the Highlander in the shape of drams or schnaps in the course of the twenty-four hours; and that, too, without his appearing to be any the worse for it. This faculty, or rather this aptitude, for imbibing raw spirits is probably attributable to the dampness of the climate. The Hollander, perhaps, for the same reason, is the only man who can hold a candle to the Highlander.

## CHAPTER XXV.

A morning walk on the Moor—Some interesting experiments in practical gunnery interrupted by a melo-dramatic incident—Its consequences—Fribbles indulges in contemplation on his life in Scotland.

The sun was just gilding the tops of the hills when Brixey looked out of his window on the morning after his arrival at the lodge. The light vapour which was still hanging like a thin veil over the lower slopes gave an appearance of great elevation to the summit of the range. He watched it gradually melt away, as though it acknowledged the supremacy of the glorious orb; and before he had finished dressing, the whole expanse of moor, mountain, and corrie was defined bright and clear in the light of day. He could hardly bring himself to believe that the landscape before him could have changed its character so completely. He had looked out upon it the evening before with something of dread, so cold and dreary, so helplessly desolate was it under a clouded sky; and if the truth were told, he had almost repented him of his resolution to leave his home comforts and the shady side of Pall Mall for such an unpromising abode, for such a cheerless climate. He had soon dispatched his toilette, and was out on the moor, taking a brisk walk and inhaling large draughts of the spirit-stirring air of the hills.

The dew-drops were sparkling like diamonds on the heather, now in its full luxuriance; the burn was rippling

joyously in its shingly bed; the trout were rising fearlessly at the early flies that were dancing on the surface of the streams; and, as he approached, a tiny wave on the shallow marked the course of the scared fish as they darted away to the pools.

Looking downwards to the valley, he could trace by its fringe of trees the course of the beautiful river, which at intervals coyly peeped out from amid the foliage. On the further bank, which was warmer and more wooded, from its southernly aspect, a few farm-houses were to be seen here and there dotted about; these were backed by a range of wild hills, the lower part of which was mostly inclosed, and the corn-fields, now beginning to put on their harvest tint, chequered the ground.

Brixey felt himself a boy again. He walked on vigorously for a minute or two, and then stopped to feast his eyes with the view. Then he was off again, and again was brought to a stand-still by some beauty unobserved before. Now he was startled by an old grouse, who rose with laughing crow, and, suspecting no harm from such a benevolent-looking intruder, settled himself close by, and peeped out at him slily from his heathery covert. Now he stopped to watch the strange proceedings of an eccentric little bird in the burn; he saw it drop into the water and emerge far from the spot where it was lost sight of. Now his attention was attracted to another wee bird, whose dazzling emerald plumage flashed in the sunlight as it skimmed along the course of the stream.

All was new—water-ousels and kingfishers, and hills and heather—all was novelty. He had never before felt that acute sense of enjoyment of the wild beauties of nature; he was delighted at the sensation, and felt grateful for it. He wondered how he could have lived so long

without the consciousness of his possessing this new sense; for Brixey had passed his life in the busy whirl of cities, and he had looked upon the pleasures of the country, which people talked so much about, as a fairy tale—a myth. He returned to the lodge happy and elevated by this unlooked-for development of a latent faculty of enjoyment.

He found Fribbles and the Captain at the door, looking out for him. They were anxious to begin the business of the day; and when Brixey told of the attractions of his morning walk, there was no responsive echo, no sympathy, from his companions. The man of the world was case-hardened; he had had the edge of his sensibilities taken off long since—if ever he was endowed with any. The other was by nature obtuse, and of that poor metal which would never take an edge—never become sharp.

Sandy and the two gillies were sunning themselves, with their backs to the wall, and solacing themselves with alternate puffs at a short black pipe of pigtail, which the united efforts of all the three could hardly induce to keep alight. The pony, with the saddle on, and a pair of rather stained game-bags over his back, was making the most of his time by getting a bite of the coarse and scanty grass in the so-called park.

Fribbles, without assigning any reason for it, announced his intention of remaining at home. The Captain and Brixey were to take an outside beat, in order to obtain some idea of the geography of the moor, and were to shoot their way home. As soon as breakfast was over, the lunch was stowed away in the game-bag, together with spare powder and shot, and, at Downey's suggestion, a couple of plaids were tucked in as well. The dogs were coupled

together, and, Brixey having mounted the pony, the party were soon under weigh.

The motive of the youth for not accompanying his friends now became palpable. He stood for some time watching them, and then, returning to the house, was soon intently occupied in the examination of the powder-flask and shot-pouch, which had puzzled him so completely yesterday. Although quite satisfied that he had already attained a very respectable proficiency in the art of shooting, he felt that it was due to himself to master the intricacies of the principles of loading. It was in this laudable pursuit of useful knowledge, that he had resolved to make some experiments in gunnery "all alone by himself." Shooting at mark, he thought, would be of infinite service to him; for, notwithstanding the fact of his having made some surprising shots the day before,—acknowledged to be so both by Captain Downey and the Keeper, both of whom knew what good shooting was,—he had a sneaking sort of consciousness of not having aimed exactly at the birds which fell to his gun: they *did* fall when he shot,—there was no doubt about that,—still it was not completely satisfactory, and it was by no means a bad notion the familiarising himself more thoroughly with the thing.

Having chosen a spot at some little distance from the house, he planted a pole in the ground, and on the top of this he stuck the shoe which had lost its fellow the day before, and in its widowed state was of no further use. He then stepped fifteen paces, and marked the distance with a bunch of heather.

After fumbling for a long time at the flask, he at last hit upon the *modus operandi*, and then, at the expense of a good deal of No. 6, which was spilled in the course of his several experiments, he found out the secret of the shot-

pouch. He then proceeded to action. Taking a long and most deliberate aim at the mark, he fired both barrels, and ran to see the result—a clean miss! not a shot had hit the shoe! It must be too far off, he thought; so, having loaded carefully again, he advanced three steps and again fired. No better—the shoe gave no evidence of being hit!

"Hang the gun!" he exclaimed, "it won't shoot a bit!" A great idea now occurred to him: to begin shooting at close quarters,—say ten paces,—and, having succeeded in hitting the mark, to increase the distance. So he advanced still nearer, and this time the shoe was fairly blown away from the stake,—it was riddled with shot. He had, after some practice, knocked over the mark several times, and had just made a beautiful shot, which upset the pole and the mark together, when he was startled at hearing a voice close to him.

"Dead! for a ducat, dead!" were the words shouted out with much vehemence. Fribbles looked round and perceived a gentlemanly-looking man, neatly dressed in a suit of grey tweed, with his hands in his pockets, and a toothpick in his mouth, close at his elbow. There was a jaunty, devil-may-care sort of look about the stranger, who did not seem to mind his having either left his hat at home or lost it on the road. He was bareheaded, and his hair, which was cropped very close, formed a sort of rough skull-cap. On being confronted by Fribbles, he threw himself into a theatrical attitude, and said in a pompous style:—

> Good morrow, noble youth! whose gallant mien,
> And stalwart frame, and skill unmatch'd in arms
> Command respect—say, by what happy chance,
> By what blest combination of events
> I find you here, alone, in this wierd spot?

Fribbles stared aghast at the speaker, who had now again

thrust his hands into his pockets, and was taking a stage-like survey of him, beginning at the crown of his 'wide-awake' hat, and finishing with the tips of his Balmorals; then looking upwards from them again, and after slowly scanning the intermediate man, ending with the crown of the hat. This done, he began to address him again.

> Art dumb, poor youth! art tongue-tied? Hath the fiend
> By dev'lish art and necromantic spell
> Deprived thee of the faculty of speech?

"Come, I say," said the frightened Fribbles, after an awkward pause, during which he saw a pair of dark piercing eyes fixed intently on his face. "I should like to know what you are up to! I ain't dumb any more than yourself."

Throwing himself again into attitude, the stranger said:—

> Tis well—But tell me, why that moody look,
> That tells of feelings outraged? Why those words,
> Of savage import? if I aught have said
> Lacking in courtesy or kindly greeting,
> I here unsay it—lackest thou yet more?
> Then take, therefore, my best apologies.

Two ideas crossed Fribbles's mind; one was to load his gun, the other was to bolt. Two reasons occurred to him to prevent his adopting either one or the other of these courses—if he loaded the gun, it might by possibility get somebody into an unpleasant scrape, perhaps himself; if he ran to the lodge he would find no one there but the maids, as the boy was gone to the 'merchant's,' which was also the post-office, with Brixey's letter. He entertained no doubts whatever as to the sanity of the extraordinary individual before him—he felt himself, as he said afterwards, "in no end of a fix."

"Who are you, I should like to know?" he blurted out atlast in a morose tone.

"Nay, look you, now, fair sir!" the stranger replied, setting his arms a-kimbo, and confronting Fribbles rather unpleasantly.

> Give me your ear,
> While with fair words, and statement no less fair,
> I plead the cause betwixt us. I came here
> With purpose honest, fraught with ev'ry wish
> And best intention, to beguile the time,
> Filching an hour from life's chequer'd span—
> An atom from the vast Eternity
> Infinitesimal—and to devote
> That hour to social, friendly intercourse.
> I seek your portals:—'ere my hand was raised
> To sound the gong, or touch the silvery bell,
> Or to my lips to raise the brazen horn,
> The wonted signal of a stranger's coming,
> Your weapon's twofold booming strikes my ear—
> And echo from the hills gives back the sound—
> So guided by that instinct's wond'rous power,
> Implanted in us all by nature's laws,
> I onward stride, and from yon pleasant knowe
> Espy the object of my search—yourself.

"Well, you know," said Fribbles, recovering somewhat from his alarm, as the stranger, who began his address in a rather excited pitch, gradually cooled down in the course of his narrative, which flowed on, without a check, in metrical language. "It's not a bit of good coming it so strong. It's all bosh, you know, spouting away like that! why can't you talk like other people?" The stranger interrupting him, went on—

> I pray you, listen to my tale—and when
> My words explanatory cease to flow,
> Bearing conviction on their course, and washing down,
> With flood impetuous, the stony brae

Which e'en now dams the current of our love,
Ope, then, the floodgates of thy pent-up griefs,
And let the raging torrent of thy speech
O'erwhelm me—

This speech was begun piano, went on crescendo, and by the time the speaker came to the last words, he had worked himself suddenly up to a pretty pitch of excitement. Relapsing as suddenly into a composed gentle manner, he continued, after pausing a moment to get wind—

Arriving at the spot, where now we stand,
I saw the bolt launch'd from that deadly tube
Strike down the foe, by fell enchantment changed
Into the semblance of a worthless brogue—
I saw his sole——

In the midst of this declamation, he cast off all at once his bombastic style, crouched down on the ground, and bringing down his speech to the level of Fribbles's comprehension, said in a low whisper:—"You see those two beggars there, coming along the moor?"

"To be sure I do!" answered Fribbles. "I wonder what business they have got on my ground."

"Hush!—not a word—" said the other. "What fun it would be to pot them—eh? Is the gun loaded?"

"Loaded? no!"

"Look sharp then."

"What for?"

"To shoot those fellows, to be sure!"

"Oh yes! I dare say!" cried Fribbles, gathering courage as he saw the men hurrying towards him. "I am not going to do anything of the sort."

"Lend it me then, there's a good fellow!"

"I shan't," said Fribbles valiantly; the men were almost within gunshot.

"We will soon see that!" exclaimed the stranger, and in a second Fribbles found himself thrown on the ground, and his gun in the possession of the lunatic, who was now careering wildly across the moor, pursued by the two new comers, to whom he was whooping and hallooing in defiance, or laughing in derision, varying his tactics by pointing the gun at them occasionally.

"Is she loaded?" asked one of the men of Fribbles, who was recovering himself from the shock of his overthrow. On the assurance that the gun was useless in the hands of the fugitive, and that the powder and shot were in their owner's possession, the two men who were already tolerably blown with the chase came to a halt, and learned from Fribbles all that had taken place. They also told their story.

It appeared that one of the men had got down at the merchant's for some purpose, leaving the other in charge of the gentleman whom they were conveying in an open carriage to Carr Bridge, from some house in the valley. The latter, finding himself left with only one attendant, had suddenly seized the reins, and excited the horses into a gallop—had leapt unhurt from the vehicle, leaving the reins loose, and had taken to the moor at full speed, arriving, as we have seen, at the lodge, long before the horses could be stopped, and the second man could come up to aid in the pursuit.

"Uncommon mad he is—isn't he?" asked Fribbles.

"Well, sir," replied one of the men, who was an English servant; "when the fit is on him, he is sometimes orkard to handle, specially to them as doesn't know his ways. I've seldom seen him come it like this before. I'll be bound now he has been a making speeches to you, sir—a-talking in poetry like—he'll go on a-talking poetry for

hours, for all the world like an actor in a play-house; but he's a good gentleman for all that, sir."

"He's just an uncanny neer-do-weel," put in the other man—"an' mair fit for a lunattic assŷ-lum, than to bide wi' decent Christian men. What will we do the noo?"

"In the first place," said Fribbles, "I will thank you to get my gun back; and in the next, to clap that fellow into a strait waistcoat, or tie him up, hand and foot, so that he can't come here bothering any more."

"Well, sir," said the servant—"I'm sorry this should have happened—*that* I am—but he has been a kind, good master to me, and I won't stand by to see him screwed up like a dog, in a strait waistcoat, nor yet to see him bound hand and foot like a wild beast. He will follow me like a lamb, if so be he ain't put upon. So do you bide here out of the way, Willie, while I go after him. You see if I don't come over him in no time."

Saying this, he went off towards the poor lunatic, who was now quietly seated on the ground, at such a distance, that he could be heard declaiming loudly, and waking up the echoes with his strange soliloquy. He suffered his man to approach him; without showing any symptom of resistance, he allowed him to take possession of the gun, and accompanied him quietly down to the road where the carriage had been left in charge of a shepherd lad. The gun was brought back by the other man, and delivered with much grumbling to the anxious owner, who contrived to make the bearer gulp down his ill temper, and drown his sense of the trouble he had been put to, in a dram or two of right Glenlivat.

"A pretty go this has been," said Fribbles to himself, as he stirred up the peats on the hearth—he had given up

all thoughts of making any more experiments in gunnery, for that day, at least. "As far as I can see," so ran the current of his thoughts, "one is always in a hobble somehow or other in this country. Ever since I left St. Katherine's Wharf, the other day, I've been in a row of some kind. I wonder very much whether other fellows come in for such adventures. Dashed if I don't think a fellow might write a book in three volumes in no time, only putting in what happens to himself. I've more than half a mind to try. One thing I am sure of, there is nothing like travelling for getting a knowledge of the world. Even *I* have learnt a good many things I wasn't up to before. It will do old Brixey no end of good, for he is uncommon soft;" and then his truant imagination pictured to him the humanising effect produced on mankind in general by the influence of the gentler sex—and he thought of Minna Cromarty, and an announcement in the county papers of their marriage, and Brixey's astonishment —and the Dowager Mrs. Fribbles's delight—and then he sighed.

It is curious to trace back the genealogy of a thought, or of a topic of conversation to its origin—how wonderfully wide of the mark the breed often proves to be from the parent stock!—yet take it up link by link, and the chain of the pedigree is satisfactorily established. Thus Fribbles, lately in contemplation of the troubles which had so sorely beset him from the very commencement of his journey, was in a short time building in the air—not exactly castles—but delicious detached villa residences in the country, in good neighbourhoods, with grass plots in front, and walled gardens behind, and pretty lodge gates opening upon turnpike roads—together with genteel, commodious, and desirable town mansions in Belgravia, with coach-houses

and stabling for four horses—which naturally suggest to him drives in the Park—with Minna, of course, by his side, and those fellows lounging at the corner and leaning over the rails to look at them: he can see them turning to inquire who that pretty creature is in the spicy turn-out, with the crimson liveries; and that deuced good-looking man with her, who is he?—and—Fribbles was fast asleep.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

A day's grouse-shooting—The muckle stag of Corriewhiskie—The mid-day halt—Effects of cold grouse—A word or two about French flies, and the flying line.

THE excitement caused by the pursuit of any object whatever is in direct proportion to the degree of difficulty to be surmounted in the attainment of it. The crack shot who will back himself to any amount to perform the most extraordinary feats, cannot forget the holiday times when he was first allowed to go out with a single gun, and when every rabbit he killed was a triumph; he will remember the delight with which he rushed to pick it up, and how it always seemed to him a preternaturally fine animal. He did not mind missing then: it was almost a matter of course. He does not care for killing now—that is now become another matter of course; but when he *does* miss, he is vexed and put out: he considers it a sort of disgrace, an impeachment of skill.

We will not say it was exactly thus with Captain Downey at present, whatever might have been the case in his palmy days. "Circumstances over which he had no control" had prevented his indulging in the sports of the field for some seasons; the only game he had of late been interested in was the game of rackets, and the certificates taken out by those who participated with him in that sport were mostly of the description accorded to gentlemen who have

been unfortunate in business. Turned loose now, as he was, upon the moor, he was realising the dreams of happiness he had often encouraged at a time when the avarice and ingratitude of tradesmen, with whom he had dealt for years on principles eminently calculated to promote confidence between man and man, had driven him into retirement, and compelled him eventually to seek "protection" from the legislature.

Brixey was much in the position of the happy schoolboy first entrusted with a gun; he blazed away at every thing and at all distances, and thought it capital fun. By taking a family shot, or "firing into the brown," as the Captain called it, he had actually succeeded in killing two grouse. Never were such splendid birds! He held them up by the legs, and then by the head; he smoothed down their feathers, and laid them on the heather to admire their symmetry; he could hardly resign them to the gillie, and he might have been seen to cast from time to time a watchful glance to see that these precious birds had not slipped their heads through the carrying stick, and flown away to spoil his happiness. It was only after they had had time to cool, and were deposited in the game-bag, that his anxiety for heir security was quieted.

They were now "on the march;" a long and rather steep ascent had brought them to the summit of a narrow strip of table-land—a sort of hog's back, or water-shed. Looking down thence in the direction of the lodge, the course of the burn could be distinguished, from the spot where it emerged from a deep gorge, and was rippling placidly to mix its waters with the great river. He could see the Spey for miles on its downward career, till it was lost in the woods of Aberellan. On the other side the march was a wide expanse of undulating ground, becoming wilder and wilder

as it stretched away in the distance, where it rose into the bare rocky peaks of a chain of high mountains. This was the forest of Corriewhiskie—very unlike the pretty picturesque, woodland scene Brixey had, in his innocence, pictured to himself. It was, for all that, he said, a glorious view, and worth coming all the way from England to see. Captain Downey was more practical: he looked with covetous eyes upon the forbidden ground, scanning its geological structure with no scientific view, but marking the corries, their usual bearings, and their capabilities, and calculating how this or that spot would be reached in stalking deer.

"It was no far from yon rock," said Sandy, interrupting the meditations of both the gentlemen, and pointing to a large gray boulder in the valley below, "we saw the muckle stag. Do ye mind, Archie," he continued to one of the gillies who accompanied them—the other was gone on with the pony, to lay out the lunch in a snug spot indicated for the mid-day halt—"Do ye mind how he lifted from the heather amaist under our feet, an' stood face to face wi' us, an' how he grew bigger—an' bigger—an' bigger?"——

"How long was that ago?" asked the Captain.

"It's maybe twalve days, or thereabouts," replied Sandy. "Ye see, Jamie Stewart's sheep had strayed awa' ower the march, an' he daur na' tak' the colleys on the ground; so Archie an' me gaed wi' him to help drive them in. After a while the tracks was lost awa' east, an' we cam' a' the way to Strathellan to Elsie McIntosh's; an' it's sair tired we was wi' the day's wark, an' we took just a dram—may be twa; an' then Jamie was no content to gae hame wi' us, bein' wulling to o'erlook the corrie ower bye; an' Archie and me cam' togither in the gloaming, an' it was just abune yon stane we saw the muckle stag."

"Well, and what became of the muckle stag?" asked Brixey.

"Eh! that's just the verra question," replied Sandy. "There he was, staring face to face wi' Archie an' me. A bonnie beast he was, savin' his havin' only one horn, wi' mair than twanty points,—an' as we lookit, he grew bigger —an' bigger—an' bigger—an' then—he was clean gane out o' sicht."

"I suppose he made off," said the Captain. "What of that? I see nothing very extraordinary in that."

"Not if he rinned awa'—but he was sperrited awa' while we lookit at him," said Sandy impressively. "There was the place where he stood, an' there was no stag: he was clean sperrited awa'."

It is a singular fact that there is not a deer-forest in Scotland that has not its legend of some monstrous stag. Most marvellous tales are told of him—of his bigness, his cunning, his charmed life; how he is met with just when he was least expected; how ball after ball has been sent at him by unerring shots—he has never been touched. The oldest forester remembers him all his life, and his father before him handed down the tradition from *his* father.

Sandy was rather displeased at the incredulity exhibited by the two gentlemen. He averred that this particular hart had been well-known in Corriewhiskie for hundreds of years—had been even shot at many times with silver balls, and still lived. He was more affronted still, when the Captain hinted that Elsie McIntosh's whiskey might have been over potent; and for some time he walked on in dignified silence.

The wild whistle of the golden plover alone broke the stillness that reigned on the elevated ridge they were now traversing. Brixey made several capital shots at them at

long range, but was unsuccessful; the Captain knocked down three out of a large flock as it wheeled over the edge of the hill, and afterwards bagged another or two. The grouse were scarce, but Sandy assured them they would find them later, at the burnside, as the day was hot and sultry.

They continued for some time on the high ground, Downey killing a grouse or two to Ponto, who had, in the course of the morning been subjected to another course of treatment from Sandy, whereby he had been rendered more amenable to discipline. Dogs and children have an intuitive perception of the feelings with which strangers regard them, and attach themselves to them, or keep at a respectful distance accordingly. The old dog had yesterday adopted the Captain—this arose most likely from the small choice left him between that gentleman and Fribbles—and not so much from love as from a becoming respect and admiration for the talent displayed by him. From the moment of leaving the lodge, Blazer had never left the pony, and when Brixey dismounted, he offered him his friendship as plainly as dog could do, jumping upon him, and wriggling his body round, as if to show that he could scratch his nose with his tail if he chose, and making as it were a sort of horizontal salaam. Finding his overtures responded to by a few kind words and a good natured pat on the head, he never went above ten yards from Brixey's gun, and when he thought there was anything before him he looked wistfully back to see if his newly adopted friend was coming, as though he would beckon him on, and having succeeded in attracting his attention he hunted slowly and cautiously up to the birds, procuring thus for him a good many easy shots. The old dog was of course disappointed at Brixey's repeated misses, but gave no token of

his feelings—on the contrary he rather wagged the tail of encouragement to him. An ill-conditioned dog would have been disgusted at such a want of skill, and would have demonstrated significantly that he looked upon his master as an "old muff."

Ponto and the Captain were more discursive, and beat the ground on either side of Brixey, who soon began to find that grouse shooting is a fine exercise,—a trifle violent, perhaps, to one who is disposed to corpulency, and who had been accustomed all his life to a flag pavement—moreover, that a double gun is heavier by much to carry than a walking stick. However, by halting occasionally to admire the prospect (short-winded and fat persons invariably show themselves to be singularly alive to the beauties of scenery in pedestrian excursions in mountainous districts—they are always stopping to call your attention to some delicious bit, or some wonderful effect of light and shade), by halting with this object he continued to get on pretty well till they came to a steep declivity, down which their course lay to the lunch.

It was a fine sight to see him, leaning on the Keeper's arm, his face beaming with good humour, laughing over his slips and stumbles, and making jokes upon his awkwardness—he only wished, he said, his young friend Fribbles had been of the party. He (Brixey) would have shown him the way to go down a precipice! He felt, he said, as if he had been a Highlander born and bred, and was treading, as his good friend Briggs did, under similar circumstances, his native heather. Downey got several shots on the descent, and Brixey would, he was certain, have killed several birds too, but that he had from prudential motives given his gun to Sandy to carry. It was all one to him, he asseverated, who killed them, as long as the

grouse found their way to the larder. It was as much pleasure to him to see his friend shoot as to shoot them himself. This is a rare instance of disinterested feeling, worthy of being commemorated.

"Yon's Jamie wi' the powny!" exclaimed Sandy, after they had been for some time slanting down a steep spur of the mountain, and he pointed to a green spot in a sheltered nook in the valley some hundred feet below them. The distance did not seem anything at all to Brixey, as he looked at it now; but the longer they walked on, the further, apparently, it receded, and he thought they should never arrive there.

The sky was cloudless—the sun scorching. On the summit of the hill they had found it cool and pleasant—they had there the benefit of what little wind there was stirring. Here, under the lee, there was scarcely a breath of air, and the change of climate was the more trying from the contrast. Brixey began to find he was undergoing the process of training, without needing any additional flannels, —he felt his knees getting shaky—very shaky—and after he had pulled up several times to *look at the view*, he fairly lay down on the heather, on his back, and panted. Still his spirits flagged not—he laughed at himself, and declared, as he mopped his face, that another day or two like that would make him quite slim and genteel; and then he got up to make a fresh start—again sat down—and thus by short stages arrived, to his intense joy, at the pretty spot he had looked at so wistfully from above, and which seemed to have been made on purpose for a bivouac.

A tiny rill was trickling into a deep basin of pellucid water, scarcely disturbing its glassy surface, and escaping from it by a narrow channel at the other extremity, through which the streamlet, now increased in volume by the new

supply from the copious springs in the pool, stole away, quietly at first, and afterwards forming a series of miniature cascades, filled the air with soft musical murmur as it fell. A bright carpet of short grass of dazzling green, lined the edges of the pool, and on this the lunch was soon spread. Brixey threw himself on a tuft of heather close by, and all his fatigues, all his troubles were forgotten.

Oh! the pleasure of that mid-day halt on the moor! Like the rich patch of verdure in the midst of the brown heather, it is an oasis in life, surpassing delicious in the present, and a bright spot to look back at in the future. To Captain Downey, again all this was a matter of course—it was part of the day's work;—not that even he, the case-hardened, was not alive to the gratification of restoring the inner man by creature comforts, and refreshing the weary limbs for the fatigues yet before him; but to Brixey, it was something more. It was perfect happiness.

It was some time, however, before he could go to work at the substantial part of the entertainment. Sandy was instrumental in bringing him "to this complexion." First he poured over his hands some cold fresh-water from the spring, then he administered a judicious portion of Glenlivat, mixed with a smaller proportion of the pure element,—and Brixey, rightly considering that the natives of the country must necessarily be well acquainted with the requirements of the climate, took, without demurring, another quantum of "the mixture as before," when it was presented to him. By these simple remedies he was soon in a condition to fall to with great zest, at the cold grouse and sundry other good things, which he washed down with a horn or two of capital Scotch ale, nearly iced, from having been sometime bathing in the cool spring,—and then he followed the Captain's example, and lighted a cigar. He could not find

the heart to refuse, under these circumstances, another horn of ale which Sandy poured out for him; and as another bottle was open, and Downey declined it, he helped Sandy and Archie to dispose of it.

So enchanted was he with this new manner of life, that he determined on the spot to dedicate the remainder of his days to the like pursuits. He would, he said, instantly purchase a moor—that was the first thing; then he would build himself a house and settle in the Highlands,—and he sang a snatch of a song to the effect that "his heart was in the Highlands, and his heart was not here." This sort of life suited him, exactly. He made Downey promise to come down to him every year—ever-y-year—assured him of the high esteem he had for him, and told him there would always be a hat for his peg in the hall.

The latter gentleman, of course, expressed his sense of the obligation, and reciprocated the friendly feelings.

"Mind you don't forget," continued Brixey. "'Out of mind out of sight'—sometimes the case—hope it won't. Sshure you, alw'ys d'lighted t'sheeyou—stayshlongshulike."

The Captain was profuse in his acknowledgments, and promised his hospitable friend that if he *did* become master of a moor, he might depend upon his not forgetting the engagement, in which assurance Captain Downey was quite sincere.

Brixey, apparently satisfied with this negotiation, assumed a recumbent position: his cigar, falling from his lips, burnt a hole in his waistcoat; and Sandy, having first carefully extinguished the fire, rubbed in the palm of his hand the offending weed, and turned it to account by filling his pipe with it.

Brixey was roused at length from a long half-hour's slumber by the Captain, who was standing over him,

bidding him jump up—it was time to be off. They had a long beat before them. He rubbed his eyes, and looked vacantly around him; it was some time before he could make out what had happened, and where he was. He made an attempt to rise,—not, indeed, a very successful one,—but, with Sandy's assistance, was at last put on his legs. It was an uncomfortable moment. He would like rather to have had another doze, it was so pleasant; but there was nothing for it but to be off. The things were repacked in the bags, and away they started.

It has been observed by us many times when shooting, in September especially, when the weather is hottest, in the south, that on taking the field *after* lunch, the party are frequently painfully conscious of the difficulty of walking in turnips; they *will not* get out of the way. In the north, we have seen, strange as it may seem, the very same impediment offered by heather; and this is exactly what occurred to Brixey as soon as he began to walk. He had not been sensible of it in the early part of the day; but it was sufficiently obvious now that every tuft of heather tried—positively tried—there was no doubt of it—to trip him up. It became at last so wilful, that, at Downey's suggestion, he resolved on giving his gun to Sandy to carry, and riding the pony till they should come to less objectionable ground. So the Captain did the shooting, while Brixey sat uneasily upon his saddle, tired and drowsy, and careless of what was going forward, till, finding at length that he had had enough of it, he left Downey with Sandy and Archie, and rode off under the escort of Jamie in the direction of the lodge. He had an uncomfortable feeling of something having disagreed with him. It must have been the cold grouse; he was not in the habit of lunching upon cold grouse. It could not have

been the ale; he had only taken one or two horns of it. He never would, he vowed, eat cold grouse again in the middle of the day.

He arrived at home, headachy and ill at ease. Nor was the state of Fribbles at all calculated to cheer him up or do him any good. He found the youth looking very miserable, and sadly out of temper. The time had hung heavily on his hands. He had thought of going to fish in the burn, but did not know how to set about it, being ignorant as a babe of the first rudiments of the gentle art. He had been for hours impatiently waiting for the return of the boy Duncan, in the hope of extracting something from him on the subject; but no boy had turned up. On the table before him was spread out all the marvellous flies which his friends in London had picked out for him at that famous emporium, "The Golden Chub,"—and a more curious selection, perhaps, never covered the leaves of even the most eccentric fisher's fly-book. Fribbles had no misgivings whatever as to their goodness, but they would have astonished any one who was not well up in the sportive entomological inventions of a London fly-maker.

To make his collection of flies perfect, Fribbles ought to have possessed a certain card of flies we bought once upon a time at Caen in Normandy. We were obliged to take the whole card, as the insects were not to be separated, and the two dozen cost us four francs. By a very judicious arrangement, worthy of imitation in a country we could name, these wonderful flies, which had been dressed to suit all waters, all weathers, all seasons, and all times of day, were stitched upon the card, and over each specimen was printed its name, and the proper time for using it. "Thus Monsieur the fortunate purchaser," as the marchand

pointed out to us, "muni d'une pareille carte (set up with such a card as that), ne pouvait pas manquer d'attraper des belles pièces en toute saison (was sure to catch big fish at all times). C'est tout un magasin, Monsieur!" he told us (a very warehouse of flies). *That* was a clincher —*that* settled us; and we instantly became proprietor of the precious lot.

They were dressed for the most part on treble hair. The hooks were of the coarsest description, and flatted at the end of the shank, like those for sea-fishing. The bodies were nearly all of chenille, very coarse, and of gaudy colours. There was one which we remember took our fancy immensely; it was called "Bibi, pour le soir" (an evening fly),—the body black, with a light blue dyed hackle of immense length. There was the "Araignée, tems pluvieux." Fancy a spider for a rainy day! This was a fine work of art. We have seen splendid spiders in France, but nothing so gorgeous as this one; its body was green,—the hackle yellow,—the size alarming. Then the "Sauterelle," or grasshopper ("grand matin"), for peep of day, was a perfect monster of green combinations. But by far the most killing fly we esteemed to be one which was entitled "Mouche," or fly *par excellence* ("pour tems d'orage"): it had no generic name. This one was a sort of Zamiel—a devil of a fly—all scarlet—just the sort of fellow likely to be about in "thunder, lightning, hail, and rain."

There were many others we could name, and describe; for they made such a deep impression on our mind that they are still, as it were, before us. The collection itself, however, we conveyed carefully to Albion, and forwarded it immediately on our arrival to a salmon-fishing friend of ours then on Spey side; and the last we heard of it was,

that the card, framed and glazed, was hanging up in the hospitable mansion of a late well-known laird, himself a keen and accomplished fisherman. Thus they were, and perhaps are still, preserved as patterns for imitation—or the reverse.

Our mentioning this circumstance needs no apology to the reader. It is done with a purpose. It is not every one who knows to what a pitch of excellence the science of fly-fishing ("la pêche à la ligne volante")—fishing with the flying line, as they poetically call it—is carried in La Belle France! With this hint from our experience, he may think it worth his while to go over to Caen on purpose to learn fly-tying, or to procure flies. He may depend upon it he will get nothing in England to match them; and he may at the same time take the opportunity of visiting the monuments in that interesting and venerable town.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Brixey goes salmon fishing—His success—And who landed the salmon—Mysterious observations on his friend Downey—The death of another fish, and much there anent.

The elder of our sportsmen soon discovered that if grouse-shooting has its pleasures, it has also its drawbacks. He felt the hard work tell upon him, and he was compelled to capitulate, or come to a compromise with his legs, as many a stout middle-aged gentleman has done before him. He began by making over to Fribbles and the Captain all the outside beats, and confined himself to the home circuit, going out with Jamie and Blazer. Sometimes they all combined matters so as to meet at lunch-time, and things went on very smoothly and pleasantly. After some practice, Brixey usually contrived to pick up two, sometimes by a lucky *coup*, three brace of birds, and was to the full as well pleased with his sport as the Captain and Fribbles could be with theirs. These gentlemen usually shot together, and rarely failed to bring home a heavy bag—Downey, of course, killing the lion's share.

Brixey had been for some time meditating a day's salmon-fishing. He had taken out his rod, and put it together more than once—he had even run the line through the rings, and made fancy casts at objects on the ground—but there was something in the whole thing which, in a way, appalled him. The twenty-foot rod was so unlike the light bamboo to which he had been accustomed in bottom-fishing—the reel was so heavy, the line so thick and so

long. The wide, rapid river, too, was no joke; and he looked at his wading-boots, and actually one day put them on to see how they felt. The decision he came to was that his feelings must be very like those of a "hog in armour." In short, the going out to fish for salmon seemed to him something akin to entering upon a new line of business, or going into battle for the first time, or riding a steeple-chase on a strange horse, and in an unknown country—but everything, he wisely decided, must have a beginning.

On announcing one morning to Sandy his resolution to take him with him to the river, he was rather surprised at the manner in which he received the intelligence.

"I'm thinking," said Sandy, "the fushing is no yours —that is, in Spey. In the burn ye can fush—but in Spey, no!"

"What is all this?" cried Brixey. "Not fish in the Spey, indeed! I tell you, man, the fishing is ours. Mr. M'Snail told me distinctly we have the right of fishing. I remember his very words—they are the same as those in the advertisement—'there is fishing *to be had* in the Spey.'"

"Oh! aye! there's fushing *to be had* in Spey—there's nae dout o' that—but she's just let to anither man,—a lord."

"I advise you," said Downey, "to go and fish, M'Snail said you have the fishing—and fish I would, if I were you."

"Certainly," replied Brixey; "I mean to go. The two lads will go to-day with you and Peter, and I will take Sandy with me: he can show me the best holes for fish, and the boundaries."

"Eh, sure—I ken weel the boondaries," said Sandy!

"but for a' that Mr. M'Snail telled ye, the fushing is let to the lord."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Brixey, whose indignation began to be roused. "You will attend me to the river to-day. Fish I will; and Mr. M'Snail shall be answerable for the consequences."

"Well," said Sandy, "it 's no for the likes o' me to say it—but I 'm thinking Mr. M'Snail will hae to answer: it 's no for me to say—but it 's no that bad for fushing the day."

It was, indeed, a fishing day—that is in so far as appearances would lead to such a conclusion. Experience, however, teaches that a good fishing day is about as uncertain, in its prognostics, as a fine scenting day, and even as the best runs have been often got with hounds when everything seemed against it; when no "southerly wind and cloudy sky" proclaimed the hunting morning, on raw, cold days, the wind in the north, and even snow on the ground—so is it with salmon fishing.

There are, however, certain negative signs, which are next to infallible, to keep the fisher from flogging the water in vain. When huge mountains of cloud, with dazzling "silver lining," are piled up in the sky, there is small chance of moving a fish. If the vapour is hanging on the crest of the upland, when there 's a "must on the hull," as we have too often been told when we were anxiously looking out for a fishing day, the fish will scarcely ever take the fly.

But this was as likely a morning as could be hoped for—the atmosphere not too clear,—the distances not too sharply defined,—the temperature genial, not hot,—the sky partially clouded, but not with those monstrous fleecy masses spoken of above. There was a light wind up stream,

and the water, Sandy gave it as his opinion, was in first-rate order, neither too high nor too low, and good in colour.

So Brixey, full of hope, not unmixed with some misgivings as to his qualifications for the work cut out for him, and Sandy, with a look of resignation to his fate, started together for the river, the latter armed with a clip, and carrying over his shoulder his master's wading boots; Brixey bearing the rod in its cover.

"And who is this lord—?" he inquired of Sandy, "this lord you talk of, that rents, as you say, the river? You *must* be wrong there—the thing is impossible. But who is he?"

"Eh! it's a lord wi' an English name. I can no mind the name—we just ca' him 'the lord.' He 's a beautiful fusher, and there's no a stane in Spey he does'na ken as well as if he was born and bred in the strath."

"I shall most certainly come to an understanding with his lordship, if we should happen to meet," said Brixey. "By-the-bye, does he live in the neighbourhood?"

"Eh, sure—whan he 's in the country. Ye 'll see the lodge down bye frae the pool of the brae—an' it 's there we 'll try first. If there 's a fush in the water he 'll be there,—it 's a principal place, the pool o'the brae."

A walk of about a mile and a half brought them to the river, which was here confined to a narrower bed than usual. The bank they were standing upon was low and shelving, and the water dashing against the rough stones that checked its career, was broken into bubbling ripples as it washed the shore. On the opposite side it was flowing, smoothly and noiselessly, at the base of a precipitous rock, which gave the name to the spot—a name unpronounceable in Gaelic, but being interpreted,—the Pool of the Brae. After preserving this character for a considerable

distance (till the rock, in fact, receded from the water side), the stream became wider and more rapid, eddying, and foaming, and battling with the masses of rock, some of which lifted up their round polished heads high and dry out of the water.

Brixey could not help contrasting in his mind this brawling torrent with the silent, smoothly gliding stream in which his punt used to be moored, head and stern, when he fished for roach or barbel at Ditton or Hampton on the Thames. The advantage, in his eyes, lay very decidedly with the latter river. Nothing, he thought, short of a miracle could enable anybody to catch a fish in such a mill-tail, such a whirlpool as that.

While he was, with the awkwardness of a tyro, getting into his wading boots, Sandy was putting together the rod, tying the joints carefully together—a process never before seen by his master. The line was passed through the rings, the casting-line attached, and nothing remained but to choose a fly. This was a much more difficult matter than it might seem, from the great variety of good-looking flies in Brixey's book—one was too bright, and one was too large—another would be the "verra thing," if it had but the turkey-wing—another would be "no that bad" if it were not so sma'. He picked out at length, after much deliberation, the dullest, and meanest-looking of the lot, tied it on the casting-line, and handed the rod to Brixey.

He was to begin, Sandy told him, at the head of the pool, throwing quite over to the rock on the other side. And now began Brixey's troubles—it was in vain he tried to get out his line. Neither by violent effort nor by coaxing could it be induced to obey orders. He flogged and flogged the water till his arms fairly ached, but still the line always

fell in a heap. "Throw to the rock on the other side, indeed!" he soliloquised.

"Just tak up the line short, and throw out," said Sandy, "an' then gie out a wee bit mair, an' then anither bittock."

Brixey tried this — it was no use, so he handed the rod to Sandy, fully anticipating a failure from him also. He, however, letting out a length of line which to Brixey seemed utterly impossible to lift again, made a cast, and the fly dropped lightly within half a foot of the rock. After explaining how this was to be accomplished, he gave back the rod to his master, who proceeded to put in practice the lesson he had received. He was in the act of drawing in his fly for a fresh cast, when a big swirl was seen in mid-stream,—his rod was suddenly jerked downwards so that the point touched the water, and the wheel was heard spinning rapidly—grinding delicious music—as the line ran out with a velocity to cut the fingers off.

"Luft the point! up wi' the rod! dinna touch the line! Oh! its a bonnie fush," cried Sandy, helping Brixey to raise the rod, and seeing that the line was free. "Hand up the rod,—are ye daft? Pit the but to him! shouther the rod Ech, wow! He 's aff the noo, and ye maun follow an' be upsides wi' him. Save us a'! wind up!" roared Sandy, as the line became slack. It had fouled a big stone.

"Ye maun tak to the water," cried Sandy in despair; "it's no deep—he 's clean gane if ye no clear yon stane."

So Brixey stepped charily and cautiously into the water, and was instantly nearly carried off his legs,—the fish was still running, while the line was the wrong side of the stone.

"Twa steps mair! just anither!" Brixey, who had now got his legs, obeyed mechanically, and was enabled to lift the line over the rock.

"It's a' richt the noo!" cried Sandy, clapping his hands.

"Take in more line, sir! more yet," a new voice was heard to exclaim. "You will lose that fish, sir, if you don't wind up your line; he is not gone down stream, he is in the deep water over there, and is making most likely up; the stream is carrying out your line; they never leave this pool! For God's sake, sir, take in your line! I knew it, by the Lord Harry!" continued the voice now pitched in alto. "*There's* your fish, sir!" as a heavy salmon jumped high out of the water a little way above Brixey, and fell back with a loud splash.

"To shore, sir! quick! D—n it, sir! don't stay pottering there! Come out of the water, I say! Here, hand me your rod," and while Brixey was clumsily stepping up the bank, the owner of the voice was winding up the line vigorously. "Now, sir, take your rod again; keep a gentle hold upon him—just feel him—no more. Bless my soul, sir! what the devil are you after?" Brixey, now most completely bewildered, had allowed the line to bag for a moment; he found himself, he did not know why, and he could not tell how, following, as well as his damaged intellects would allow him to comprehend their meaning, the directions of a fine looking elderly gentleman, who was capering about in a high state of excitement with a clip in his hand, while a man was standing by, looking on, with a rod slanted over his shoulder.

Doing as he was bid, like a good boy—now winding up line, now slacking it off—now going a little up the water, then a little down, he succeeded in the course of about half an hour, the very longest half hour he had ever passed, in bringing on his side a heavy salmon, whose bright silver belly flashed in the shallow water.

"Now, sir! keep the point of your rod up, well up, sir!

and walk gently backwards. Steady, sir! ste-a-dy! I have him—a noble fish, by Jupiter!" exclaimed the old gentleman, as he lifted the struggling fish, securely clipped under the belly; "and now, sir," he continued, as he shook the fish off, and it was floundering on the bank ere the man could give it the *coup de grace*, "permit me to inquire to whom I am indebted for the pleasure of seeing a fish killed in my own water?"

He looked a little warlike as he put this question to Brixey, who had handed the rod to Sandy, and was now standing helplessly looking at the fish, his arms hanging at his side,—they were almost paralysed; as long as the excitement continued, he felt nothing,—he was altogether dead beat now. He recognised in the new comer the gentleman who had brought the big salmon to the inn at Fochabers the other day.

"I think, sir," said the latter again after waiting some little time for a reply, "I am fairly entitled to ask how it happens that I find you here killing fish in my favourite pool?"

"Eh! ye'll no pit a finger on yon fush, Sandy Grant," exclaimed the man with the rod, angrily; "are ye no shamed, man to——"

"Be quiet, Donald!" The old gentleman spoke mildly but authoritatively. Donald kept on muttering, and looking daggers at Sandy, who stood convicted,—he knew it well.

"I give you my word, sir," said Brixey, "that question was not unlike the one I was about to put to you."

"I tauld ye—I tauld ye!" cried Sandy, addressing his master, "the fushing was no yours. It 's no my fault."

"Then it would seem," interrupted the old gentleman, "you can have no excuse for being here, sir!"

"Pardon me, my dear sir," replied Brixey, warmly; "if

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I really have been trespassing, I have done it in utter ignorance. I give you my honour, I fancied I had the right of fishing in the Spey—that it was part of my holding. I am only lately come to reside at Tommiebeg; I admit that my keeper did tell me the fishing was let to another, but the factor, Mr. M'Snail——"

"Is a very sharp practitioner," put in the other; "and so he told you you were to have the fishing, eh? Now, I assure you I have rented this water for many years."

Brixey said all that could be said in such a case, for he felt how much he had been in fault. There was no mistaking the sincerity of his regret, it was evident he had been under a wrong impression, and the real owner of the fishing was so good-natured about it, and made so light of the affair, that he was soon put at his ease.

"Let me know, now, whose acquaintance I have had the pleasure of making in consequence of this mistake," said the gentleman. "I suppose I ought to introduce myself; my name is Malvern—Lord Malvern at your service."

Brixey told his name, and would again have entered into new apologies, but he was stopped short by Lord Malvern's assuring him that he considered himself fortunate in thus making his acquaintance. It was a matter of gratulation to himself the having a good neighbour at Tommiebeg. He went on to say that he was but little at his fishing box at this season: he came down usually about the end of June for a month or so. He had been lately down at Fochabers, and had come back for a day or two's fishing, after which he was going into Ross-shire. He hoped Brixey would consider the river his own for the remainder of the season, and congratulated him on his having killed so fine a fish.

"Weigh that fish, Donald, and give it to Mr. Brixey's man. Fifteen—ah! I thought that was about its weight;

I assure you, Mr. Brixey, we old fishermen do not often see a better fish in these upper waters; I congratulate you on your sport. You are not—I think I may say it—a very experienced salmon fisher?"

"That is the first salmon I ever caught, or indeed ever tried for, my lord; I am only sorry it did not fall to your lot. If you will allow me to see your lordship catch another, I shall take it as a great favour, and shall moreover learn something of the art."

"So be it, then," returned his lordship; "however, we have several good pools before us, and we can, if you please, fish them in turn."

Sandy had however pulled off his master's boots, and Brixey asseverating that his arms would not stand any more such hard work that day, desired him to put up the rod, and to return with the fish to the lodge.

The gentlemen walked on together, discoursing on the ordinary topics of Highland life—of the breed of grouse—of deer—of blackcock and ptarmigan—of salmon and trout fishing; and his lordship had a great deal to say on the subject of flies, of their different patterns—of Irish make and Scotch make—of the peculiar characteristics of the Spey fly—of the temper of Kelly's and O'Shaughnessy's hooks—of the comparative advantages of joint rods and spliced rods, the greater part of which was Hebrew to his companion. In the meantime Donald and Sandy had fraternised, and after smoking the pipe of peace together the latter had gone homeward.

"I had been somehow," said Lord Malvern, "under an idea that another person had taken the Tommiebeg moor. I forget how or where I heard it. I certainly was told hat a man named Downey had got it; and this I thought not unlikely, as a friend of mine told me he was sure he

had seen him one day on the coach at Fochabers—the very day, by-the-bye, if I recollect right, I had the pleasure of showing you that fish at the inn door. I am very glad to find it a false report, for that Captain Downey is not exactly the sort of man I should care to have as my next door neighbour. He is a very objectionable character—very objectionable indeed."

Brixey very much surprised and alarmed at this unlooked-for condemnation of his guest, was on the point of explaining how it came to pass that he had made the acquaintance of Captain Downey, and that he knew nothing of his antecedents, when they arrived at the next pool.

"Now then," said the old lord, "I will fish this stream down as far as that stone yonder, where the water breaks. If we do not move a fish before that, we shall find one there, I hope." Brixey watched with wonder how carefully the fly was put over every part of the water. He could not comprehend the ease with which the line flew out to its full length, and how the fly lighted gently at a distance almost fabulous.

"Ah! you saw that?" cried the fisher, as he struck sharply, and missing the fish, drew the fly slowly to hand. "Donald, take the rod; we will give that fellow a minute or two to get his wind," and he sat down by Brixey on the bank.

"Pray what was it? I saw nothing at all," said the latter.

"Nor did I *see* much myself," returned his lordship, "but I just felt a fish, and saw the swirl in the water. I am certain he is not pricked, and I think he will come at me again presently——Now for it, Donald!" and as his man handed him the rod he said to him, "You saw him, did you not?"

"Deed aye, my lord! He'll no be touched I 'm thinking. It's the richt heuk, an' he'll no miss it anither time it's pit to him."

Making first two or three casts above the spot where he had raised the fish, the old lord again brought his fly, to which he gave a slightly tremulous motion, cleverly across it. "I have him now," exclaimed he—Brixey saw the wave caused by the rush of the fish, which scarcely broke the water, "and well hooked, too, I can feel," he continued as he now got upon the most commanding spot he could find, to be above the fish when playing him. It was delightful to see the cool business-like way with which the old fisher handled it, how he held his rod well up, observing to keep the rings *on the upper side*, in order that the friction on the wood might act as a sort of drag upon the velocity of the line as it ran out.

After a time the fish stopped. Brixey thought it was gone, till he was told it was only sulking at the bottom.

"See how I will move him!" said his lordship. "Some people throw stones at a fish when he is boring thus at the bottom of the pool, to shy him. Now look here! Observe I have a tight line upon him. I can just feel his mouth. Well, I give a smart tap to the button on the end of the butt, thus,"—and suiting the action to the word, he struck it with the palm of his right hand. Again the click of the reel is heard as the fish rushes madly down stream, the old lord following it on the bank.

"There 's nothing for it now," he said at last, as he came to a place where some alders growing near the river were dipping their lower branches in the stream preventing his progress on land, and the fish was still going away at a rattling pace downwards. "There 's nothing for it but to go in. Donald," he added coolly as he stepped into the water,

" don't forget to speak to the factor about these trees—we must contrive to have them down next year; they ought to have been cut away this."

And now came the struggle. The conflict between the brute-force of a strong fish in his own element—that element too giving him long odds in his favour, by reason of the rapidity of the current down which he was working, and the skill, the judgment, and the patience with which the frail engine employed against him was worked by a veteran fisher. The water's increasing depth now prevented Lord Malvern from venturing another step forward—already he felt the spray trickling over the tops of his wading boots. He *must* turn the fish. Something must go in the process, either the line or the rod or the hook or the fish, if the latter continued headstrong enough to keep on boring down stream. Standing sideways to the current, feeling well his footing, and bearing back upon the leg up stream, he now turned the butt of the rod towards the fish, " showing him the butt," as it is technically termed.

" Eh, gude sirs, it's an unco strang fush ! " said Donald in an anxious tone to Brixey, who having put the finger of Wonder into the mouth of Apprehension, was absorbed in contemplation of the exciting scene.

The mad rush of a salmon down stream is as exhausting to its own powers as it is usually to those of the fisher, whose task is to follow if there be no impediments on the bank, and if his progress be impeded by trees or rocks, by wading in the water, and he must guide the fish much in the same way as he might strive to keep the head of a runaway horse straight. To accomplish this requires much presence of mind and nerve and foresight on the part of the fisherman.

For a second or two it seemed as if the rod must yield to

the heavy strain put upon it; the line quivered as though its strength were taxed to the uttermost. It slackens suddenly and the old lord begins taking in line as rapidly as he can wind it, while he is backing slowly to land.

"I have him now, I think," he said, as he stepped ashore and followed the fish slowly up stream. "He is a game fish, and fights well; but he must give in all the sooner for his exertions. It is your lazy fellow that gives most trouble. This is a famous place to land him. I coax him, you see, gently into the shallow. He will almost follow me now, as I walk backward. Now, Donald, stand ready. I will bring him to that stone. What, not done yet?" The fish made now another dash into the stream; but it was his last effort. His strength was spent and he now suffered himself to be guided passively to the spot indicated before by his captor. Donald putting the clip *over* his back fixed him under the ventral fin, and lifted up in triumph a fine clean salmon, which proved to be about twelve pounds weight.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

In which salmon fishing is still treated of—and Brixey's explanations prevented—Singular conduct of Lord Malvern—A game at écarté, and who loses—Mysterious disappearance of Captain Downey—Reflexions thereupon.

The deep interest Brixey had felt in the capture of the fish had for a time diverted his thoughts from the very unpleasant observations made just now by his new acquaintance on the character of Captain Downey; they recurred now painfully to his mind, and he felt at the same time that he ought to acquaint Lord Malvern that this person was his guest and make known to him under what circumstances he had been induced to invite him. It would never do, he thought, for his lordship to find out afterwards that the very man he had expressed so very strong an opinion about, was actually under the roof of one to whom he had shown so much civility, and to whom he had not scrupled to avow his sentiments on the subject. He resolved to make a clean breast of it, but he shrank from the task; moreover, there was a great obstacle to his doing so.

Lord Malvern was one of those happy people who love to hear themselves talk; he rattled on without a check from subject to subject, and always managed to nip in the bud poor Brixey's revelations. He was however determined to persevere, and when his talkative companion stopped a second to take breath, he said, "Your Lordship mentioned just now——"

"Oh yes, I was going to tell you," broke in the latter; "he came at me no less than four times, always short, and tried to drown the fly. I had offered him a fresh one twice, and I thought now I would try a big spring fly No. 1 hook. It fitted his mouth exactly; I had him the first throw. You remember that fish, Donald, last year, in the pool of the isle?"

"Oh, aye, my lord, he took it fine!"

"You caught the fish then, at last?" inquired Brixey.

"To be sure I did; that will prove to you what I meant."

"Certainly, certainly," replied Brixey; "not a doubt about it. But your lordship was saying just now——"

"True," said the old lord, interrupting him. "Very true! I was saying that the most expert trout fisher is completely at fault when fishing for salmon; his knowledge of the habits of the trout, his knowing exactly where to find him, makes him fancy he can tell instinctively where to look for a salmon. He would waste his time and his strength, for example, in fishing that likely looking stream we passed just now by the ford. Now the salmon never remain in that pool; they always run through it; they never stop where there is a shifting bottom, where the spates change the bed of the river by fresh deposits of sand and gravel."

"Pardon me, my lord, I was going to ask——" Brixey was going on when he was again stopped short by his lordship's saying,

"A very natural question, how a man is to know a river? He must for a time take with him some one who has been in the habit of fishing, who will tell him, according to the height of the water, where the fish lie. In heavy water they drop down to the tail of the stream, and as it gets

finer and thinner daily they move upwards, but always to some well-known lay. When the river is very low, he should study its bed and comprehend the anatomy of each pool and stream—but I am giving you quite a lecture on salmon fishing."

"I am sure I consider myself much obliged to your lordship for so much useful information, but there is a thing I wish particularly to clear up; you were speaking just now——"

"Of the advantage of the underhand throw—the Spey-cast you would say; it is good every way. For instance, when you have a high bank or trees behind you; again, when the wind is against you. You would be astonished to see some of the fellows about here, the length of line they can send out; I am frequently surprised myself. Why, here is Donald! he could put the fly over to that rock easily by almost a mere turn of the wrist."

Poor Brixey began to think it was hopeless; he waited in vain for an opening for the subject uppermost in his mind, but Lord Malvern went on dilating at large upon his favourite theme. Sometimes just as Brixey fancied he had a chance they came to a stream which his lordship fished carefully down, and then he was either wading or too much pre-occupied with his work to attend to any remarks whatever. The moment he had finished and handed his rod to Donald, he always contrived to go on with the conversation exactly where he had left off.

There was likewise another unpleasant contingency. Downey and Fribbles had talked of shooting on the lower ground, and had hinted at the possibility of their working towards the river to see how he was getting on; he had heard the guns coming nearer and nearer, and every moment he expected to see them appear.

"Your party are out to-day," remarked his companion; "they seem to have plenty of shooting; for my part I never take a gun in my hand until the fishing closes. Only compare the excitement of fishing with that of shooting. You go after a grouse; well, a grouse is but a grouse, you never get one as big as a turkey. Now, in fishing you never know what the bigness of your fish may be—it may be a monster—a thirty or a forty pounder. Think of that! Every throw is excitement; fancy the glory of killing a strong fish in a strong current with a single gut! There is something in that, eh? Dont you agree with me, Mr. Brixey? On a single thread of silkworms gut! Beats shooting, that! Better sport far than knocking over a grouse with a hailstorm of small shot!"

The report of the guns told that the shooters were drawing towards the river nearer and nearer. Brixey had never felt so miserable in his life; what would Lord Malvern think of him? He tried once more to explain, but they had just come to another pool, and the old lord taking his rod from Donald proceeded to fish it down.

His agony is not to be told when he heard a loud shout of greeting from Fribbles, and he saw that gentleman and Downey within fifty yards of him. The latter seemed suddenly seized with a fit of irresolution; he stopped an instant, looked intently at the group at the river side, and making some observation to his companion, turned back hastily, but not before Lord Malvern had caught a glimpse of him.

"Here, Donald, quick!" he exclaimed, "my glass, quick!"

His man produced instantly a small telescope which his lordship directed at the retreating Captain. "It is, by the lord Harry!" cried he. "I should know the rascal a mile off; why, sir, why, Mr. Brixey," he went on; "how

is this? Captain Downey is of your party? I am sorry, sir, if I hurt your feelings by saying, in utter ignorance of your being acquainted with him, what I think of your friend" (laying a strong emphasis on the word) "your *friend* Captain Downey. But mind, sir, I do not recal one word of it,—not one word, sir, mind that!"

Fribbles had come up in time to hear this indignant speech of the old lord, and to see his poor friend positively writhing under the effect of it, quite overwhelmed with confusion.

"I do assure you, my lord," he said in a deprecating tone; "I do implore you to believe——"

"No apologies, sir, I beg; there needs no explanation, none whatever! I can only express my regret that I should have allowed myself to be deceived by appearances; it will be a lesson to me, sir, a lesson to an old man. The old adage, 'Birds of a feather.' Now recollect, Mr. Brixey," —Lord Malvern spoke in the most imperative manner now —"my permission to fish this water is not extended to that person, that Captain Downey,—he shall never throw a line where I have power to prevent him. Donald! do you hear? Take the glass; look that fellow, there, well over, who is stealing away yonder; mark him well—he is on no account to wet a line in my water! And now, sir," (addressing himself to Brixey) "allow me to wish you a very good morning; our ways lie in different directions. I leave this country at the end of the week, after that you are at liberty to fish. I will not recal that; but if you will do me a favour in return, it is this—to keep that—that individual —Captain Downey, out of my sight as long as I *am* here."

"If you will listen to me one moment only, my lord——"

"Excuse me, sir; you can say nothing that will have the effect of causing me to change my resolution."

"But I intended, indeed I did, I tried over and over again to explain to your lordship that my knowledge of Captain Downey——"

"Sir, unless you wish to affront me—and I can hardly think that can be your intention—do not again mention in my presence the name of that individual. It is hateful to me. I again wish you good day, sir!" and turning on his heel he walked away, followed by Donald, who, while this was going on, had been amusing himself by looking Fribbles well over. He recollected the piscatorial remarks of the youth at Fochabers, which did not tend to raise him much in his estimation.

"An' yon ither lang lad!" he said to his master as he turned to go; "he's no to fush?"

"My objection extends only to that other person," said his lordship without looking round, but loud enough for the words to be heard by the two gentlemen.

"I say, Brixey," said Fribbles, "that old gentleman seems to 'cut up rough,' as they say. I should like to know what he means by it. I shall go and ask him what right he has here—what the devil he has to do with——"

"Peter," said his old friend, sadly, as he laid his hand upon the youth's arm—and they walked away together; "Peter, I would not have had this happen for anything you could name. I am completely lost in the good opinion of a person who seemed inclined to be friendly and neighbourly and that by my own fault—my own carelessness. Peter!" he continued, "we are placed in a very unpleasant predicament, I sadly fear; that is, I think we have hardly acted wisely in making a friend of Captain Downey. I cannot believe that that kind old gentleman—Lord Malvern, that is—would have expressed himself so strongly if he had not

good grounds for his dislike to Captain Downey; and in truth we know nothing about him——"

"Oh, hang it! you know," replied Fribbles; "Downey is a first-rate fellow; he has affronted Lord What's-his-name somehow or other, and he 's prejudiced against him——"

"No, no, Peter," said Brixey; "I am afraid there is something more than mere prejudice. Captain Downey has certainly been most useful to us, there is no denying it; but it is an unfortunate acquaintance we have made, I fear. The question is, what is best to be done? I am satisfied there is something wrong, something against the character of our guest; and we must—I hardly know in what manner—we must contrive to get rid of him. That is easier said than done. I should not think of affronting him, it has been our own doing, the inviting him to visit us, and we must get out of it as well as we can. We have made a mistake, a sad mistake; we have made nothing but mistakes ever since we took this place."

"I do not know which way to turn," Brixey continued, after walking on for some time in a brown study; "I cannot see how we are to get at the rights of the thing. It is a grave attack on Captain Downey's character. If he has been guilty of any dishonourable conduct he ought not to be with us a day. But we cannot tax him with anything. By-the-bye, what made him turn back just now? did he say anything? that looks bad."

"He only said he was tired and should go slowly homewards; I do wonder if there is anything in it," said Fribbles. "For the matter of that, you know we do not know as much of Lord What-d'ye-call-im as we do of Downey."

And so they continued speculating on the probable reasons Lord Malvern might have for his horror of the

latter personage, and they talked the matter over without advancing a step towards a decision as to the line of conduct they ought to take towards him.

"That is a fine fish you sent home this morning," said the object of their thoughts, coming towards them with a perfectly composed and easy manner; "he must have given you some sport?"

Brixey looked grave and made a curt reply. Downey saw at a glance what was passing in his mind. "Oh! I see plainly enough," he said, "how it is. It *was* that old bore, Malvern, you were talking to just now; I was not quite certain, but I thought I recognised him. I suppose he was trespassing in your water; he is always poaching about somewhere. I am doubtless indebted to him for some highly complimentary remarks on me. Ah! I am right, eh!"

"It certainly was Lord Malvern I met," replied Brixey; "and it would seem he has more right than I have on the river; *I* was the trespasser. He seems to know you."

"I should think he did; he has reason to know me too, the old ass. I have been obliged to pull him up once or twice rather sharply, and he cannot get over it."

"Really, Captain Downey, I must say Lord Malvern behaved in so handsome a manner to me when he found me fishing his favourite stream—the fishing is his, and we have been taken in altogether about it—I cannot but be grateful to him. If his lordship was a little abrupt in his leave-taking of me, it was only because he recognised you as being of the party, and truly you do not seem to be altogether in his good graces. He became quite excited when speaking of you."

"Excited was he? Say rather in a towering rage—that

is his way. You should remember, Brixey, there are always two ways of telling a story. I dare say his lordship amused himself and you greatly at my expense; but you do not know him. Of all the hot-tempered, touchy, thin-skinned, cantankerous old files I ever met with, Lord Malvern is the very worst. Nobody can abide him. He has quarrelled with all his family and all his friends, if ever he possessed any. If anything goes wrong with him, he will pitch into any one who happens to be nearest to him. Now I will give you an instance. He had lost one day at the Club in Edinburgh one or two bets at billiards, and after abusing everything and everybody, cutting the cloth and breaking the cue, he sallies forth into Princes Street, boiling hot with passion. He had not proceeded many paces before he saw a fellow stooping down and tying his shoe—'D—n you! you 're always tying your shoe,' he exclaimed, as he gave the poor devil a kick behind which sent him spinning along the pavement. (This was a pure invention of Downey's.) He is hardly fit to go alone; in fact, I happen to be on intimate terms with Liphook, his son, you know. The young one *is* rather fast, and he and the Governor do not pull well together, and the old fellow hates me like poison, because I take the boy's part. He chooses to fancy that I am in league against him. Ah! he little knows what a friend I have been to him! But that is gratitude!"

Captain Downey spoke warmly, like a hardly used, much injured individual; but Brixey was not altogether hoodwinked by this history: he had come to some conclusion of his own. There was something so prepossessing, so gentle, in the old gentleman's manner, altogether so irreconcilable with this account of him, that he could not believe him to be the Tartar Downey represented him to be. And, if the truth must be told, Brixey had begun to get rather tired of his

guest. He was not blind to the selfishness of Captain Downey, and he saw how that personage had assumed the mastery, ordered the people about, blew up the keepers, bullied the servants, and contrived to put both Fribbles and himself in the background.

It was not that his suspicions were roused as to the question of Downey's character. Brixey was too good himself, too single-minded to suspect any one; but he disapproved entirely of a custom Fribbles and the Captain had established lately of sitting over écarté till a late hour, long after he had retired to rest. He had spoken to the former about it, but he had assured him they played merely for amusement; for merely trifling stakes. Still he did not like it. The adroit way, too, in which Downey always administered a dose of flattery to Fribbles whenever he had an opportunity to do so, was not so well concealed as to escape Brixey's observation, and he was painfully conscious of the effect produced by it upon the youth, who, instead of deferring to the opinion of his old friend as he had been accustomed to do, now always set that of the Captain in array against it. Brixey could not help feeling that he was playing second fiddle to Captain Downey's first in the trio.

All these circumstances, to which he had not as yet attached much signification, he now began to consider in a very different point of view. They had annoyed him a little hitherto; they grieved him much now. It had struck him already as being a careless proceeding of Downey's, his not having squared accounts with him for the travelling expenses from Aberdeen, in which Brixey had stood paymaster, as well as for the small sum he had advanced to him. A fortnight or three weeks had been suffered to elapse without any allusion being made by the Captain to his account at his banker's. Punctual and punctilious himself in money

matters, Brixey at first thought this delay was attributable to merely carelessness. He now began to think whether it might not be reprehensible.

As may be imagined, there was a restraint—a sort of wet blanket like chill pervading the party that evening. Brixey made one or two efforts to dispel the gloom that compassed him about, and Captain Downey essayed to prove his utter disregard and forgetfulness of the events of the day, by a few lively anecdotes. Both parties were completely unsuccessful—both broke down in the attempt, and felt that they had done so. Brixey retired early to ponder again the unpleasantness of his position. He was quite resolved to get rid of the Captain; but how? He could not give him notice to quit. His only hope was that the latter, when he found things did not go on quite smoothly, might guess the cause, and take the hint and his departure together.

As soon as Brixey's back was turned the cards were produced as usual, and Fribbles had such a run of ill luck that he was in a short time completely cleaned out of all the money he had with him. The Captain then handsomely offered him his revenge—just one game, double or quits. He hated high play, he said, as he proposed this, and it was only from the unwillingness he felt to be so large a winner of his friend's money, that he was induced to play for so high a stake. He *must* give Fribbles a chance of redeeming his losings. Fribbles lost, however. He had never had such a run of ill luck. "The Captain had turned up the king ever so many times," he could not help remarking, "and he had not done so once." He declared it hopeless to play, and Downey good-naturedly recommended him not to go on. The best player in the world, he assured Fribbles, could do nothing when the cards ran so against him; and Captain Downey, wishing him good night, went to bed with a bad

headache, as he said, and a cheque for fifty pounds in his pocket-book on Fribbles's London banker—not, however, without promising to give the youth his revenge on the morrow.

"I wonder Downey is so late, Brixey," said Fribbles on the following morning, when the breakfast was on the table. "I am afraid he is not well. He was complaining last night of a bad headache, and I have not heard him stirring. I shall go and look after him."

On his return he brought word it was as he thought. The Captain was too unwell to get up. He would take his breakfast up-stairs, and if he felt up to it by-and-by, would join them at lunch-time at the old place—the Spring.

No sooner were the shooters fairly off, than Captain Downey's ailments seemed to have left him suddenly; or perhaps he became apprehensive of being laid up with a bad illness out of reach of good medical advice. Howbeit, he was speedily dressed, and actively engaged in packing up all his goods and chattels. This done, he proceeded to the larder, and choosing four brace of the finest birds, tied them by the legs and appended an address upon them. He next summoned Jamie, who at his request had been left to attend him to the moor, and bade him assist the boy in carrying his portmanteaus, gun-case, and other matters down to the road, where, strange as it may appear, a dog-cart was found to be waiting. In this his effects were packed, and having handsomely tipped the bearers half-a crown a-piece, he desired Duncan to tell his masters that business of the utmost importance required his presence in London, and then Captain Downey, taking his seat by the driver, was whirled away in the direction of Morayburgh. Thus it will be obvious he did not turn up at lunch-time at the trysting-place, but neither Brixey nor Fribbles were at

all surprised at not seeing him there, as it had been left doubtful. So they went on shooting, and came home at the usual hour with rather a lighter bag, as may be easily imagined, than ordinary.

We will not attempt to describe their consternation at learning the departure of their guest. After the first uncomfortable sensation, however, of having been victimised, Brixey felt as though a weight had been taken off his mind. He breathed more freely. He was more disposed to laugh than to cry. Not so Fribbles. He could have wept for very vexation. The more so because in the course of the day he had taken up the cudgels warmly in defence of Captain Downey, and had almost quarrelled with his old friend for persisting in imagining there could be anything but what was fair and above-board and gentlemanly in the conduct of that individual. He could not help now remembering Downey's extraordinary luck last night in always turning up the king.

"Peter," said Brixey, "we have had another lesson—a hard one; but I am not unwilling to pay for it, if by so doing we are quit of that fellow." He only thought of his own loan to Downey. Fribbles made no reply. He could not bring himself to confess to what extent he had been pigeoned by his late ally.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Explanations are satisfactory—A Letter from Miss Martha Brixey—A parting Word about the Captain—Low Spirits of Fribbles—Brixey sees a wonderful Beast—An Otter Hunt—The Use of a Clip—The Celebration of the Death of the Otter.

Brixey's first care after the sudden disappearance of his guest was to write to Lord Malvern to explain how his acquaintance with that worthy had originated, as well as how it had terminated. He set forth, likewise, how he had several times attempted to inform his lordship of the fact of Captain Downey being with him, and in what manner he was prevented doing so. He expressed his regret at having brought into his neighbourhood one so distasteful to him, and reiterated his thanks for the kindness Lord Malvern had shown him in giving him and his friend, Mr. Fribbles, liberty to fish.

This letter he despatched by Sandy early the next morning, and he received by the bearer a reply in which Lord Malvern expressed his pleasure at learning the flight of Captain Downey from that part of the country, and congratulated Brixey in having got rid of him upon any terms. His Lordship said, moreover, that he considered it due to Mr. Brixey to tell him, without entering into particulars painful to dwell upon, that he attributed a great deal of his son's extravagances to his unfortunate intimacy with Captain Downey, and that the latter had made himself personally offensive to him by presuming to address him after his inti-

mating to him that all intercourse should cease between them. The latter went on to say that his Lordship, assuming Brixey to be ill provided with flies, had taken the liberty of enclosing him a few patterns, which he had found to be killing in the Spey; and, expressing a hope that they should meet the following year at the river side, he wished him all success in his fishing.

This missive operated as an effectual salve to Brixey's wounded feelings, and restored him at once to his usual equanimity. In considering the issue of his acquaintance with Captain Downey, he could not but admit that the presence of that individual had been almost necessary to him in the outset of his new career as a sportsman, and he wisely struck a balance in his account against the loss he had sustained in pocket by enacting the part of banker.

The day's post made him still happier by bringing him a letter from his sister, the first he had received since he left home. We must give it *in extenso*, as illustrative of the domestic habits and the amiable character of that estimable lady, whom it had cost much mental and bodily exertion to compose and write out, from long disuse of epistolary practice. It was as follows:—

"My dear Samuel,—I have had the pleasure of receiving your *nice* letter, which I knew was coming by the *grouts* in my *tea-cup* at breakfast, besides a *letter* being in the *candle* two nights running, and a *coal* flew out of the fire the very day it came, burning a hole in my apron, watching the boiling, at least it ought *never to boil, only simmer gently*, and this proves how *true* tokens *always* are, although you never will believe in them, of the raspberry-jam. It turned out *beautiful, the jam*, I mean, of *course;* you could not think I meant the *hole in my apron*, which was not of

much consequence, only it might have been *set on fire* and *burnt* me. So when you come back I promise you a *bolster pudding* as often as you like, which I know you are partial to, though Dr. M'Phun will insist in calling them *roly-poly* puddings; but you know *my opinion*, so I need not say any more on that subject, and so *does he* for the matter of that, for you have, *many's the time*, heard me *tell him my mind*.

"I am glad to hear you arrived safe and in health at the Scotch moors, and met with no *disasters at sea*, told in the newspapers every day, almost, by *steamboilers bursting* and striking upon *hidden rocks* in the *deep* ocean; and the poor creatures let off *blue lights* and *signal guns* of distress till they are picked by *Manby's apparatus* and the *life boats*, as lately happened in the 'Times' on the *Scilly Islands*, which made me think of you, Samuel, and how *imprudent* it was to leave a *comfortable* home at your *time of life*, with nobody but a *giddy boy* to look after you in a *savage* country. I am *shocked* at Peter Fribbles's behaviour—going to sleep in the *ladies'* cabin! not knowing his own *birth*, indeed, which I can *tell* to a *day*—he is 26 come next 1*st of April*, and *old* enough to *know better*. I blush for him. My opinion is, Samuel, that boy will *come* to *no good*.

"That Captain Downey seems to be a *very* nice man, and I hope when you come home you will bring him to dinner. I am quite *interested* in him, although Dr. M'Phun did *laugh* in his *tyrannical** way, and said he must write to you about your *pleasant* acquaintance, who is living *on his wits*, he says; and I told him it was not *every* body that had *any wits* to live upon. He did not much *like* that, and he told me I was too *hard* upon him.

* Query? *Ironical?*—(Printer's Devil.

"Our neighbour, Major Fireball, has been several times to ask after you. I think him a *particularly nice agreeable* man. He is very partial to *grouse*—but he told me on *no* account to *mention* this to you, because it would seem like as though he said he should *like* you to *send him some*. He sends his *kind* regards, and hopes you have enjoyed *good sport*.

"I hope you always remember to wear those great *waterproof boots* when the grass is *damp* a shooting, and always take your *umbrella*, not your best *silk* one, but the one I got covered for you with *alpaca* for six-and-sixpence—quite good enough for the *country*, and not so liable to be carried off *by mistake* as a silk one, or *stolen by* the Highland cattle lifters in Walter Scott's 'Rob Roy.' I suppose, by-the-bye, you do not see much butter and cream for your tea, which an *egg* beat up will do *instead*—that is, if there are any *hens* in Scotland. I hope you found the packet of *grits*—I slipped it into the *right-hand* corner of your portmanteau. When you get a *chill* put your *feet* in *hot* water, and if you put *two teaspoonfuls of rum* and little *nutmeg* into it—I mean the gruel of course—you will find it beneficial, and in my opinion it is better without a *shred of lemon-peel*, which some recommend, but you please *yourself*.

"Last Saturday, you will be glad to hear, I put the *last* stitch into my tortoiseshell cat. I began it on the 12th of May—she looks *beautiful*, though I say it, and almost *like life*. By the time you come home I shall be half-way through a *lovely poodle*, which will *match* nicely with the tortoiseshell cat on the *front* drawing-room sofa.

"The policeman often comes in the evening. I *suspected* he was keeping company with Jane, till Job told me he only comes to look at the fastenings of the *doors* and *windows*. I don't exactly see why he should stay so long, but

Job assures me it is *all for our good*, and I do suppose it is. It is very curious I find *no difference* in the butcher's and baker's *bills*, although you are *away*, and one mouth less to feed. I hope your two maids are *tidy* and *careful*, and your cook is not one of the *wasteful* sort. They want a *deal* of looking after—*maids* always do—and if you leave them to themselves, Samuel, take my word for it, the work will *never* be done *properly* in a house. I often wonder *how* you can get on without me. I must now finish my letter, with best remembrances to Peter Fribbles, who I hope is growing *steady* and is *ashamed* of his *conduct* in the hotel at Aberdeen—if he is not, tell him, he *ought* to be.

"I remain, dear Samuel,

"Your affectionate sister,

"MARTHA BRIXEY.

"P.S.—The box of grouse came this morning by the Parcels Delivery, and Major Fireball happening to be passing by at the time, dropped in *kindly* and helped Job *to open it*. What *beautiful* birds! The Major got one for his trouble.

"I forgot to say, when you come home, bring me a few yards of real *Highland green Scotch plaid;* and if you can get a receipt for *short cake*, I should like to have it.

"Mrs. Quibble has set up a *parrot*—its *screams* are *awful* to hear—and she to talk of *nuisances*, indeed!"

This letter was followed a day or two after by one from Brixey's old friend, Dr. M'Phun, who, thanking him for a box of grouse, took the opportunity of enlightening him a good deal as to the antecedents of Captain Downey, with whose family he had long been on terms of intimacy. It was much too good an opportunity for a joke to be missed;

and the Doctor bantered his old chum unmercifully on the very highly creditable acquaintance he had made, which, he went on to say, was extremely likely to be of use to him as an introduction to people in the North, where Captain Downey was pretty generally known and appreciated. The Doctor wound up by giving a strong recommendation to Brixey, as well as his friend, by all means to keep their pockets buttoned up till he could get quit of his guest; and the better to enable him to bring about this desirable event, he bid him mention to the Captain that he was in correspondence with him (M'Phun). This, he thought, would have the effect of hastening his departure.

It matters not to say more of the history of Captain Downey—it would be only to give the miserable details of a life misspent, of talents misapplied, of opportunities neglected. But that his family connections had placed him in a more "exalted circle" (as the "Morning Post" hath it) than that of which so many less fortunate individuals are destined to form a segment, the parallel of his career may be read often in the "Times" under the article "Insolvent Court."

He had succeeded in getting all he could hope for out of his unsuspecting hosts, and observing very accurately the impression made upon Brixey's mind by the representations of Lord Malvern, he decided on moving off, as we have seen, in search of fresh quarters—not, however, without a hearty malison on the head of the old lord for disturbing him before he had thinned the grouse a little more, and smoked a few more of some undeniable Cabanas, of which Brixey had just broached a fresh box.

Captain Downey was gone, and a delightful calm settled over Tommiebeg. The larder was not quite so handsomely furnished now as heretofore, and the grouse had an easier time of it; by dint of practice, however, our two sports-

men managed to kill enough for their amusement, and for the supply of the table, leaving a small overplus every now and then to make up a box for exportation to the South. For a few days matters went on smoothly enough, and then a change came over Fribbles.

It might have been vexation at finding himself duped by one to whom he had taken a violent fancy, or the conviction of having exhibited a painful amount of "verdant" simplicity to a man who had taught him to consider himself "one great one" in knowledge of the world, wounded his self-love—perhaps it was the effect produced upon him by the receipt of two or three letters lately, which he might have been observed to snatch hastily from the bearer, and to convey immediately to his pocket without making any remark. Whatever might be the cause, it came to pass that the youth became gradually more abstracted, and loved to seek sweet communings with himself.

His old friend was at a loss to account for this change, otherwise than by attributing it to regret at losing his more active companion on the moor. All his efforts to console him were peevishly rejected, and he remarked with pain that the youth became every day more and more moody and reserved.

An incident occurred one day which was productive of new excitement, and had the effect of rousing Fribbles from his torpor. Brixey had taken his rod and fishing-basket early one morning to get a broil of trout for breakfast—how sweet and good these little burn trout are! On a rock in the middle of a rather deep pool, he was amazed at seeing a strange-looking creature reposing. Suddenly it seemed to subside into the water—there was no splash, no noise—it vanished unaccountably—he looked at it, and, lo! it was gone. He hurried back to the lodge open-mouthed, full of

the mysterious being he had seen, and which his heated imagination painted to him in very exaggerated colours. He had read of kelpies, mischievous elves who haunt the fords and ferries of rivers in Scotland, of water-sprites who are occasionally met with in the cool fountain, and he believed firmly in the existence of mermaids—at least he did not see why there should not be mermaids.* Thus he was more than half inclined to fancy he had been privileged enough to obtain a glimpse of some unearthly being or other—it mattered not of what class—the very existence of which was looked upon by the incredulous as a myth.

This delusion was speedily dispelled by a word from Sandy, who had no sooner heard Brixey's narrative, than he proclaimed the nature of the unknown apparition. "It will be the otter!" he exclaimed, with much animation and delight. "Ech, sirs, it will be just the muckle beast we huntit the last year in Sir Tydley Wynke's time. Saw ye no on the burn-side ony leavings of trouts?"

Brixey averred that he had remarked with much surprise, at the water's edge, two or three fish that appeared to have had a bite taken from them behind the head. No doubt remained as to the identity of the animal, and it was forthwith arranged that the afternoon should be devoted to an otter-hunt. Sandy was, in the meantime, to go round to certain friends of his to collect some dogs, and to borrow a salmon-spear or two.

At the hour appointed, Brixey and Fribbles proceeded to the mouth of the burn, where they found Sandy, accompanied by a brace of hearty farmers, and a shrewd-looking

* Hugh Miller, in his "Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland," says of the Mermaid: "Thirty years have not yet gone by since she has been seen by moonlight sitting on a stone in the sea, a little to the east of the town; and scarce a winter passed forty years earlier, in which she was not heard singing among the rocks, or seen braiding up her long yellow tresses on the shore."

little man in a cat-skin cap, and a capacious shooting-jacket many sizes too big for him, so stained and polished by hard wear, as to render it impossible to discover of what material it was made. Close round his heels were clustered some half-dozen terriers of every degree—rough and wiry, business-like dogs, all of them. This respectable personage, who was introduced to the gentlemen as the fox-hunter of the district, was armed with a long-handled clip, and was evidently looked up to as the great man of the day—as a master of hounds ought always to be. Headed by him, the party progressed up the burn, studying carefully the tracks, and letting the dogs range a little on either side. It was evident that the otter must have been for some days feasting in happy security. He must have become very dainty, too, in his feeding, contenting himself, after the most approved *gourmet* fashion, with only the choice delicate morsels of the trout, and leaving the remainder to waste.

On approaching the pool where Brixey had viewed the animal, an old, crafty-looking, rough dog, who seemed an especial favourite with his master the fox-hunter, hit upon the scent; it was soon taken up by the rest of the pack. The otter had been there, but the scent was cold, and they hunted all the rough ground about, in vain. Just above the stone on which the beast had been sitting, was a deep pool, and at the head of it was a fall of a couple of feet from a long, smooth shallow above. It was decided that the otter had gone up, and that he would inevitably make for this deep water as soon as he was disturbed.

Fribbles, who had fraternised with one of the farmers, posted himself close to him, balancing himself on some stepping-stones immediately above the fall; the rest of the party followed the hunt up-stream. Suddenly a loud shout and the angry yelping of the dogs told that the

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game was afoot, and a large wave was seen rolling down the shallow. Fribbles's neighbour stood with his spear raised, while the youth, who had lost his footing and was now standing up to his shins in the water, was brandishing aloft a pole with an iron spike, being uncertain on what side he was to look out for the enemy. There was a dash of the spear into the water, followed by a very uncomfortably-sounding execration in Gaelic guttural from the owner, who had missed his quarry, while at the same instant Fribbles received a heavy numbing blow on his shins which knocked him off his balance, and as the otter slipped over the edge of the fall into the deep pool below, Fribbles was toppled over, head foremost, after him. A cheer of encouragement was set up by the rest of the party at his heroism; they thought he had gone in on purpose.

"Eh! it 's a bonnie loup," cried one.

"It 's a braw chiel; but it 's weel doukit he 'll be for a' that," cried the fox-hunter.

"Bless my heart!" cried Brixey, as he rushed up panting with excitement, in time to see the head and shoulders of poor Fribbles emerge from the middle of the pool, dripping like a merman, sputtering out the water he had taken into his mouth, and scared out of his senses, for he fancied the unknown beast had charged him, and having overcome him in fair fight had pitched him into the stream.

"Oh dear! oh dear! Save me!" he cried piteously. "Hi! somebody! save me from the dreadful beast!" "Oh dear! oh dear!" he kept on howling, as he felt himself hauled out of the pool, stern foremost. The fox-hunter had waded out as far as he could, and inserting his clip into the seat of his nether garments, landed the helpless youth in the most workman-like manner, the latter fancying himself all the while in the power of the terrible unknown.

In the meantime the chase continued along the burn, for the otter, frightened probably as much at the strange tenant of the pool, as Fribbles was at his unseen foe, waded and swam with great rapidity down-stream, partially seen when the water was not deep enough to cover him, and raising a great wave in his course down the deeper parts, followed by dogs and men. The poor beast was soon headed, however, for Grip had him fast by the neck, and though the otter made his teeth almost meet in the dog's shoulder, he could not shake off his hold. A blow from a spear dispatched him, and he was hauled out of the stream quivering, with Grip still holding on, amid the cheers of the hunters. He proved to be a dog-otter of monstrous size. Wonderful stories were told of his misdeeds and his poaching propensities, of the number of salmon he killed, and the many escapes he had had. He was even supposed to bear, like the muckle stag of Corriewhiskie, a charmed life.

He was carried in triumph to the lodge, where a cold collation was soon set out, of which his captors were invited by Brixey to partake. The liberality of that gentleman put no stint upon the whiskey, and he thereby established his popularity for ever in the country. The sitting was prolonged to a late hour to poor Fribbles's sad discomfiture. Finding himself utterly unequal to the occasion, uneasy in body, and perturbed in mind, he had retired early to rest, but his slumbers were broken by the outbursts of song and laughter from the party below; and it was with a feeling of something approaching to satisfaction he turned himself on his uneasy couch, when he heard them break up, and the door was closed upon them. "Thank Goodness," he thought, "that's all over," as he heard the chorus of a Gaelic bacchanalian song die away in the distance.

## CHAPTER XXX.

Visitors at the Lodge—Pig-shooting in Ireland—A Lucky Shot—Big Game at Bandalore—Lapidivorous Hare of Buffon—The Green Goose—Bengal Tigers in Scotland.

"THERE 's two persons at the door, asking for ye," said the boy Duncan, on the Sunday afternoon after the events chronicled in the last chapter, laying before Brixey and Fribbles two cards. On the one was to be read, engraved in prim Roman capitals, "Major Mysore, Altnafoyle;" on the other, in good round text, "Captain Kilkee, R.N., Ballyshindy." They hurried, "on hospitable thoughts intent," to the door, where they found the gentlemen dismounting from their rough shaggy ponies.

The introductions on both sides being duly made, the strangers announced that they had come to pay a friendly visit; that they were near neighbours, only ten miles off across the hill—a mere nothing. They were soon busily engaged in the work of *restoring* themselves after their ride. While they were thus employed, their hosts had an opportunity of noticing the peculiarities of their guests.

The one who was introduced as Major Mysore was a tall, grim, cadaverous-looking person, erect in carriage and formal in manner. A bronzed, weather-beaten face was propped up by a high black stock, the buckle and strap of which were openly displayed behind above the low collar of a tightly-buttoned indescribable sort of coat, half military tunic, half shooting-jacket, of stuff resembling a

blue baize. His thin spindle legs were cased in very tight pantaloons of Russia duck, over which were buttoned a pair of well-worn tan gaiters covering the ancle, and partially concealing shoes of monstrous substance and thickness of sole. The naval captain was a portly, red-faced, jovial-looking man, about five feet nothing, but making up in breadth what he wanted in height. He was dressed in a suit of dittos, of shepherd's plaid.

After lunch and the topics of the morn had been duly discussed, the visitors announced that one of the objects of their coming over was to invite the Tommiebeg party to join them in a battue for the blue or mountain hare, on the following Wednesday, promising them at the same time some shots at the ptarmigan, which had not yet been disturbed.

"If you have never been present at anything of the kind," said the Major, in a slow sententious kind of delivery, "I can take upon myself to say—I am warranted in saying—that you will have——"

"Undeniable sport," exclaimed Captain Kilkee, impetuously, finishing the sentence in a rich mellifluous Cork brogue.

"Precisely—though not in the precise words," continued the Major, "what I was about to observe. I repeat, Mr. Brixey, you may reasonably calculate on having some——"

"Magnificent shooting," the Captain again put in.

"Permit me, Captain Kilkee, to remark that you have a very singular and rapid way of taking the words out of my mouth; but I wished further to say, that if these gentlemen can be satisfied with such poor sport as this country affords, we shall be honoured with their company. We have it not in our power to offer you a tiger."

"God forbid!" thought Brixey and Fribbles, in unison.

"And I am truly sorry I cannot show you an elephant —or even a pig."

"Is it a pig you mean?" exclaimed Kilkee, with a hearty laugh. "Bedad, but it's Ireland's the place for pig-shooting, all the world over!"

"Bless my heart!" said Brixey. "I am no great sportsman, and have not much experience in such matters, but I confess to this being the first time I ever heard of shooting pigs in Ireland."

"Ask the Major, there," cried Kilkee, laughing till he was nearly choked with a fit of coughing, "ask the Major, *who* killed the sow in Ballyshindy? Bedad! it's himself knows how to fill the bag:" and regardless of the grim looks of the old Major, he gave a knowing wink across at Brixey and Fribbles, and went on to narrate with intense delight, how that the Major, who had lived all his life in India, was a most redoubted sportsman, and had bagged more elephants and potted more tigers than any officer of the H.E.I.C.S., civil or military; that, beating a wood at his place in Ireland, the Major, in his ardour, completely forgot where he was, and seeing a big sow gorged with acorns get up suddenly near him he let fly both barrels, and doubled her up on the spot.

"Grunt! grunt! grunt!" we heard one moment; "Bang! bang!" was the next to it. 'I've got him!' says he. 'Never *was* such a bit of luck!' says he, as the poor sow gave her parting grunt. 'Sure never was in this world such a bit of luck!' says he. 'Tare an' ages!' bawls Mike Conolly, who was hid up in a tree, thinking, the devil, we'd pass him by, with a gentle remonstrance to his pig for trespassing. 'Oh, murder!' says he, slipping down the tree, and coming flat on his

back on the ground. 'Oh, murder!' he blubbers, as he gets up and throws himself on the corpse of the deceased pig, and putting his arms round the neck of the beast; 'Oh! hubbaboo! hubbaboo! Oh, Biddy, mavourneen! is it dead ye are? Oh, bad luck to you, Major Mysore!' he says, 'it's yourself has ruined me intirely!' 'Oh, Captain, dear!' he says to me, 'it's the rint's killed for everlasting. What will I do? Hubbaboo! hubbaboo! my heart's broke intirely!' Four pound ten that lucky shot cost you, did it not, Major?" asked his friend, going off into another apoplectic fit of laughter, while the hero of the tale sat grimly listening, without moving a muscle.

"Ah, Mr. Brixey!" said the Major, in a sad tone. "It is but child's play—child's play, sir—this Highland shooting—only fit for boys, not for—eh? don't you think so?" and he looked over his stock hard at the person addressed. It was a failing of the Major's to leave most of his sentences unfinished. Satisfied himself of what he meant to convey, he left it to be divined by his listener, who consequently had to draw on his own resources for what was left unsaid.

"I—a—really," answered Brixey, much perplexed. "I am scarcely qualified to—a—to say."

"Never been in India, Mr. Brixey, eh? Never saw a tiger, eh?—never. Your young friend has, probably—eh, sir?" addressing himself to Fribbles.

"Haven't I? Dash it! I should think I had, often enough—and lions too."

"Ha! then you feel as I do, eh? Poor sport! poor sport here!"

"Well, now," replied the youth, "I think it is rather fun to see them fed at the Zoological. When the fellow

holds the meat just outside the bars, doesn't the hyena laugh?—that's all!"

"Pooh! pooh, sir!" exclaimed the Major, with a look of disgust. "There are no tigers, sir—no lions—no hyenas, in confinement—all tame cats, sir—no more like the wild animal than—their very nature is changed, sir. Now, look here, Mr. Brixey—here we are in a fine wild country—plenty of room—sheep to feed upon on the hills—deer in the forests, and cattle in the low grounds—turn out a consignment of Bengal tigers, with a sprinkling of elephants—ha! ha!—preserve them for a few years, and then—eh?"

"It 's mighty pretty, talking about Bengal tigers," said Kilkee. "We would soon have moors at a discount. Who the devil would take the trouble, and go to the expense of being eaten up by a beastly tiger?"

"Who?—why I would, for one; and in our club, sir—the 'Horizontal'—wouldn't there be—eh?—men, sir, who are sportsmen, not dandies—eh? I am right, eh?" Major Mysore was rapidly warming with his subject.

"I own," said Brixey, "I should not much like to find myself face to face with a tiger."

"It would be awful!" suggested Fribbles.

"Not a bit of it—quite the contrary," replied the Major. "I never told you my story of shooting the three tigers at—eh? to be sure, how should I? Of course I have not, because I never before had the pleasure—I *must* give you that—won't take five minutes. You must know, sir," he continued, drawing his chair closer to Brixey's, while Kilkee, making the excuse of going to have a cigar in the fresh air, left the room, followed by Fribbles—"You must know, sir, I was sent up with my company to Bandalore, one of the most damnable stations in the

Presidency—the whole country nothing but jungle. 'Made your will, Mysore, my boy?' said old Bungay of ours, whom I was relieving: he was always—couldn't help it—would have his joke. 'Hard lines,' says he, 'daren't go outside the palisades—place regularly infested by tigers: they sleep with one eye open all day, and growl and fight all night over the poor devils they carry off in the evening. Good-bye,' says he, 'take care of yourself, good people are scarce. Stay a bit,' he says, just as he was going away. I'll bet you a thousand cheroots to your big single gun, I get a step if you go out after these infernal tigers in this unsainted place—you can put it down in your will, old fellow, and your executors will hand it over, you know, all right. I am really sorry for you—devilish—I am really—God bless you!'

"Well, sir, before daylight the next morning, my fellow comes to me: 'Another woman and an infant in arms gone last night, sir,—that makes nine in the last week, sir, they tell me.' 'It must be put a stop to,' says I; 'this state of things can't—we must not for a moment—never do at all——'

"I give you my word of honour, sir, the monsters had been up to the very gates at night—there were the tracks—one of enormous size—I vowed, sir, I did, that the tiger that made that track—I swore I would——"

"I suppose," said Brixey, "you marched against them with all your company?"

"Devil a bit, sir; I went alone—you shall hear. That very day I superintended the digging of a hole big enough for me to stand up in, at about a hundred yards from the fort. At twenty yards from this I dressed up a figure of a man, and stuck it up, having the moon at my back. It was a brilliant night about the full of the moon. I took

with me my two rifles, a double Beckwith, and a single Purday, together with a heavy cavalry sabre. By the Lord, sir, I had hardly time to establish myself comfortably in my hiding-place before—there were two of them—straight towards me. On they came, creeping cautiously—suddenly they crouched down. I admit, sir, the moment was—it really was—I confess to have felt a trifle——

"There the beasts lay, sir, with their heads towards me, and in a bad cross light too. I was gazing at the beasts when I heard a loud roar, and hang me, sir, if there was not another tiger standing broadside on over my dummy, which he had thrown down. Before the other two beasts could reach him, which they did in about half-a-dozen bounds, I had put a ball into *him*, and there *he* lay, tiger No. 1. The others did not mind the report any more than —walked round and round the dead body, giving it an occasional tap with their paws; and there was I, sir, with my finger on the trigger, waiting for a fair opening—it came at last—I made a beautiful shot with my second barrel, and there lay tiger No. 2."

"Dead?" asked Brixey.

"Dead, sir,—but wait a moment: the third animal crouched and crept off rapidly—I lost sight of him—by the powers, sir, there he was within ten yards of me, flat on the ground, with his head to me, and I could see his tail angrily moving from side to side. I brought my Purday to bear upon him, and pulled—a leap into the air, accompanied by a fearful roar, brought him nearly upon me—I could feel his breath, sir, as he gasped, and could hear the guggling of the blood in his mouth. I assure you, Mr. Brixey, I never did in my life—never—I dared not stir to reload, but grasped my sabre tightly, and there I remained till young O'Foozle came out with a score of our fellows to

see what had become of me. It must have been a couple of hours I was there, sir, face to face with the brute—I saw them come on—they came straight for the dead tigers. 'That not him big tiger, Sahib,' I heard a fellow say who had been with me in the morning, and told me of a tremendous brute that had carried off a score, at least, of women and children. 'That not him big tiger,' he said, as he came up to tiger No. 1. 'And that not him, nether,' as he looked at No. 2. 'What's that great heap yonder?' I heard O'Foozle say, as he pointed to a dark object about seventy yards—seventy-three it was, we measured it afterwards—it was tiger No. 3, sir, the famous tiger I had heard of—a tiger, sir, of most extraordinary—wonderful——"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Brixey, "No. 3 was all this time close to you—if you remember."

"No, no, that was No. 4—I *told* you it was."

"I do not remember four," said Brixey, much puzzled.

"Look here, sir,—there was one, you know, the first barrel, that we call No. 1; then there was the one with him, that is No. 2; the next one. about seventy yards further—the big one—*that* was No. 3."

"But, perhaps, I am very stupid," said Brixey; "but how do you account for the one near you—the last shot—I mean?"

"Oh, *that—that* was No. 4—the fact is, I killed two at a shot—however, there were the tigers, one, two, three and four—no doubt about that—can show you the skins."

"I suppose you had plenty of tiger-shooting while you were stationed in that part of the country?" said Brixey.

"Never saw a tiger afterwards, sir; they found the place too hot to hold them—they must have known, Mr. Brixey, —the sagacity of animals is so very—I can believe almost

anything of them—it was soon passed round among them who was come—must have been so—however, they emigrated, one and all—better, they thought, than being exterminated. It was a pleasing sight to see the children playing at prisoners' base in the evenings, till their mothers came to fetch them in."

Major Mysore was in his glory. He had got a listener, which was rather a luxury to him. He did not often get such a chance, and wisely determined to make the most of it. On he went, telling story after story, in each and all of which himself was the hero; dovetailing one into the other in so ingenious a manner, as effectually to prevent Brixey from offering him any interruption, without being guilty of impoliteness to his guest. A diversion was caused at last, by the return of Captain Kilkee and Fribbles.

"Time is up, Major!" exclaimed the former. "Time for us to be jogging. Wonderful adventure that of the Major's, Mr. Brixey, at Bandalore—shooting the three tigers?"

"Surprising, indeed," replied Brixey, "but there were *four* tigers!"

"No—no, only *three*," said Kilkee. "*Three*, I assure you."

"Bless my soul!" cried the Major, pulling out a big silver watch, and suddenly interrupting his friend. "I had no idea it was so—eh! we have not a moment to—. We must really, Mr. Brixey——."

"There were only *three* tigers, though!" put in the Captain, maliciously.

A sudden exclamation from Major Mysore interrupted the discussion. "Oh! those damned spasms again!" he cried out, as if suffering great pain, and rubbing his leg tenderly. "Oh! it will carry me off one of these days!

Excuse me, Mr. Brixey, but ever since I got that ball in the hip—quite a barometer."

"It is a sort of *shooting* pain the Major is subject to," said Kilkee, drily. "He is apt to feel it after telling these Indian stories; they are too exciting. Do you feel better now, Mysore? We had better be moving. Ah! I see you do feel less now!"

"I do—yes — certainly," answered the Major, a little crestfallen. "We shall look out for you then on Wednesday, gentlemen!" he said. "We shall be able to put you up—only a shakedown—if you like at night. Bachelors' quarters."

"And if you do not mind sleeping on a shelf in the cupboard," added Captain Kilkee.

After some little talk over the arrangements for the forthcoming expedition, the Major and his friend mounted their ponies. The former, from the originality of his appearance and length of limb, would have created much sensation in Rotten Row, particularly if he had been accompanied thither at about five o'clock, on a fine day in the middle of June, by his fat, joyous-looking little friend, by way of a foil.

"Queer animals those blue hares must be!" said Fribbles to Brixey, as they were taking a stroll before dinner. "Captain What's-his-name has been giving me a good deal of information about them. He says they are quite blue."

"No!—no!—grey. They are *called* blue hares," said the elder gentleman.

"Well, all I know is this. I put the question to him straight, and he told me they were perfectly blue—sky-blue, he said; but I do not so much wonder at that, if it wasn't that they got their colour by feeding on the rocks

and stones on the high mountains. The blue hare is the lapidivorous hare of Buffon, it burrows in the rocks and feeds on nothing but stones—lapidaceous diet, he called it."

"Bless my heart!" cried Brixey, "I can't believe that; besides, I do not see why, even if they did eat the stones, it should affect their colour. We know very well that birds ought always to have some sand to pick up—my canaries always have some; but that does not change their colour."

"Now, there you are wrong; for the food does change the colour of some birds. There's the goose."

"The goose!" exclaimed Brixey, much astonished at this assertion.

"Yes, to be sure—the goose—did you never see a green goose?"

"I cannot say I have ever seen one, except on the dinner-table," replied Brixey. "I never met with one alive."

"That is exactly what I answered Captain What's-his-name, when he put the question to me. 'You know,' says he, 'the difference between the green goose and the stubble goose? Simply a matter of feeding. The young goose feeds on the green corn in the spring, and becomes a green goose. The Michaelmas goose feeds on the stubbles, and is white in consequence.' Now, it is a blue stone that the hare always feeds upon."

"Where is it to find blue stones? Captain Kilkee was certainly joking," said Brixey.

"I tell you," replied Fribbles, "he was quite grave and serious. It's easy enough to see when a fellow is cramming one. He asked me whether the mountains did not look blue at a distance—of course they do. Don't you

remember remarking to me how blue they were the other day from the top of the hill, there? Well, the reason of that is that they are all a formation of blue lias; and *that* is what the mountain hares feed upon. I have read myself of blue lias."

"But," suggested Brixey, "these hares become quite white in the winter. How do you account for that?"

"Oh! that is simple enough," returned Fribbles. "The Captain told me it was from the change of diet, when there is nothing but snow on the hills."

"Peter! Peter!" said Brixey. "I suspect Captain Kilkee, who seems to be a funny fellow, has been laughing at you."

"Oh, nonsense! I like the idea of his attempting to come over me! He is not at all the sort of fellow to do that. I think him a deuced pleasant, gentlemanly kind of man; not an atom of humbug about him. I like him uncommonly. He is not such a stiff old chap as the Major. Talking of him, by-the-bye, do you remember what he said about sending for a shipload of tigers to turn out. I had no notion he was serious."

"Serious!" exclaimed Brixey. "I should think not, indeed!"

"Well, you know, I should not have thought so myself, only I asked Captain What-d'ye-call-'im about it. He told me, *in confidence*. 'You had better not talk about it,' he says 'because people are always so illiberal, and have such ridiculous prejudices. Major Mysore is now expecting a consignment of Bengal tigers; eight or ten brace; for the purpose of turning out and stocking the forests in Scotland, just in the same manner as some lord—I forget his name—did with the big woodcocks from Norway.' It is a devil of a shame, I think" continued Fribbles; "and he has

got no right. I told the Captain so; but he says there is no clause in his lease to prevent him stocking the moor with any game he chooses; and nothing but a special Act of Parliament can do so; before that can be passed, why, you know, the beasts will be all over the country. I know one thing; you will not catch me another year upon the moors, if I know it.

From all this it may reasonably be inferred that Captain Kilkee had not been idle during his *tête-à-tête* with Fribbles.

It was not often that the gallant Captain, whose powers of hoaxing were special, and whose execution of practical jokes was unequalled, had found so fair a field for the exercise of his talents, and he had not failed to improve the occasion.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

A reflection or two on angling—Fribbles becomes a contemplative man—His recreation accordingly—Notes for a tourist—Pleasant for Mr. Fluffey—Much good advice rejected by Fribbles—Thoughts on Matrimony—Doubts.

To those who look upon angling as an idle, stupid amusement, who will quote to you the old pedant's definition of the fishing gear as "a stick and a string, with a worm at one end and a fool at the other," who will tell you, with a self-satisfied smile, that, for their parts, they have no patience—patience, forsooth!—for fishing, it is altogether a work of supererogation to say one word in praise or commendation of the gentle art. No arguments will make converts of those whose ideas of angling are bounded by the muddy banks of a sedgy pond, or the restless towing-path of a reeking canal.

The conceited and fastidious poet who, for the sake of perpetrating a diabolical rhyme, abuses dear old Isaac Walton, and wishes

> The quaint old cruel coxcomb in his gullet
> Had a stout hook and a strong trout to pull it,

hated angling because his infirmity prevented his ever attempting to follow the pursuit, and professed to despise, for the same praiseworthy reason, all who did. Bearish Old Johnson was not of the stuff of which anglers are made, "non ex quovis," &c.; and if we may be allowed to apply

another classic quotation to the angler, we would say that he, like the poet, "nascitur, non fit."

It certainly cannot be said that Fribbles was one of Nature's anglers. To be sure, he *might* be one; but if so, the taste and the talent were yet to be developed. He had never been a-fishing in his life.

"The contemplative man's recreation!" the youth said to himself, when in meditative mood he had taken up a copy of "Walton's Complete Angler" (which always formed a part of Brixey's household books), and read the title-page. "Contemplative man! That's me!" he soliloquised, with his not unfrequent disregard of grammar rules. "I begin to get tired of shooting, day after day; always such a bustle and hurry, a fellow never has a moment to himself, to think." And then he leaned back in his chair, and indulged in some day-dream.

After awhile he abandoned the profitless train of his ideas, and with a deep sigh turned over the leaves of the delightful volume before him, till he came to the "Milk-maid's Song," the first line of which caught his eye, and rhymed to his thoughts,

Come, live with me and be my love!

and then he sighed again, and read the song to the end.

"The contemplative man's *recreation!* This book," he continued, soliloquising, "is called *recreation!* ergo, fishing means rest, peace, comfort, content, happiness!" And he pored over the pages of the quaint, guileless book, and fancied that he had found at last a pursuit congenial to his inclinations. He felt himself an angler, as many a wiser man has felt before him, when seduced by the same enchanting spell.

The results of this new feeling were apparent on the

following morning when he declared his resolve to go salmon-fishing. His tackle was brought out, and the purpose to which the anchor was to be applied was explained to Sandy to his utter astonishment. In vain the latter protested against such an innovation on the established routine. Fribbles knew better than he did; had not his friends at the Club set it down as an essential part of the salmon-fishing apparatus? as if *they* did not know more about the thing than a mere Highlander. So the anchor and line were handed over to Jamie to be carried down to the river, Sandy and he testifying intense dismay and disgust thereat. If, however, these ignorant natives had been surprised at the anchor, they were still more so when they beheld the gigantic rod and reel with which Fribbles was provided.

We were amused some years ago by the ludicrous epithet of "a piscatorial pole" applied by a sporting critic to the heavy rod of a stalwart and accomplished fishing acquaintance of ours, who excited that gentleman's indignation by "walking" several fish, one after another, out of the Shin, without deeming it necessary to go through the conventional process of playing them. If he had seen the tool which Sandy, open-mouthed with wonder, was now engaged in putting together, he would have been at loss, with all his descriptive powers, to find any expression adequate to convey an idea of its proportions. He might have quoted, not inappositely, the lines of the poet descriptive of angling on a gigantic scale:—

> His angle rod made of a sturdy oak—
> His line a cable, which in storms ne'er broke—
> His hook was baited with a dragon's tail,
> He sat upon a rock, and bobbed for whale.

And some such idea occurred to Sandy, as he was passing

the line through the rings. "It's mair fit for whales and sharks, an' the like o' that. There's no a man on Spey Side can throw a line wi' a fir-tree," he said in a decided tone.

Fribbles determined to wear a bold front, and rebuked Sandy sternly for daring to make such an observation. He thought, however, he would first practise a little casting in a mild way; so grasping the huge rod, he began beating the water with a short line, having a monstrous fly of his own selection at the end of the casting line, in the most heroic manner. He was not long in discovering that the "contemplative man's recreation" was awfully hard work, unless the contemplative man's arms were made of iron. The men meanwhile looked on in silence at this unusual display of physical force, and it was only when the youth had laboured till he was obliged to cry *Peccavi*, and to appeal to Sandy, that the latter ventured to make any remark.

"It's no for me to say," said he; "aiblins ye'll know mair yoursel than us o' the ways of fushing in ither parts; but ye'll no kill fush in Spey."

"The fact is," observed Fribbles, looking as unconcerned as he could, for the ingenious youth could not endure being considered other than an experienced fisherman. "The fact is, you know, I am not yet accustomed to this rod. It is perhaps a little too heavy, at first—I shall soon get used to it, however;" and giving the rod to Sandy, he bid him make a cast or two while he rested. He calculated that by careful observation he should learn the art of throwing a fly, which of course is easy enough—like very many other things—when you know how to do it.

Sandy's first care was to put on a fly at least four sizes smaller than the one he had been obliged to put on at his master's order at first. The latter made a show of opposing

this; but after some discussion, and an expression of his private opinion as to the different merits of the respective insects, it was carried that a more likely fly (in Sandy's judgment, at least) should be tried. Having gained his point, the man walked boldly into the water, and having with great difficulty got out a fair length of line, fished the stream down without moving a fish.

"Deuced bad sport this!" cried Fribbles, as Sandy walked ashore at the tail of the stream, exhibiting symptoms of fatigue—his arms were in fact nearly crippled with the exertion. "I don't believe there is a salmon in the river," he continued, "or else we must one of us have caught one. I shall go to another hole." So the party proceeded, anchor and all, to a famous cast, called the Pool of the Isle.

A small low island divided the river at this spot into two streams, and just below the junction was a fine run, ending in a deep pool. It was here Fribbles resolved to go at it in earnest. With Sandy's assistance he got into his boots, and ordering him to carry the anchor over to the island, through the shallow, he proceeded thither himself. Here, having seen the anchor made fast, he fastened the cord round his waist, and then, by turning round and round, wound it about his body, leaving a few yards free to begin with. His two attendants were looking on all the time, speechless with amazement. They saw him now take the water valiantly; he flogged lustily till he came to the length of his tether, and then commenced one of the most eccentric gymnastic performances, perhaps, ever exhibited in any river. It became, of course, necessary to unwind the cord, which could only be accomplished by the fisher turning himself completely round, as though he were executing a waltz step in the water, and the difficulty of this manœuvre

was considerably increased from the circumstance of the bottom of the river being composed of loose, round boulders, while the weight of the rod was such as to give a certain top-heaviness to the performer.

Stumbling and tottering on his unsteady legs, Fribbles inwardly cursed the moment when he had yielded to the seduction of the "contemplative man's recreation." His agony was increased tenfold, too, by the apparition of a party of three gentlemen, whose attention having been attracted, from the high-road, by the very extraordinary gyrations of a man in the middle of the river, had quitted their carriage to obtain a nearer view.

It was while executing one of his aquatic priouettes, that Fribbles, whose line was left to float down the stream, felt a sharp tug, and the shouts of all the party on the bank made him aware he had hooked a fish. He let the reel spin, and stood aghast, the rod's point looking well down stream. He heard nothing of the friendly advice given him—he saw nothing—he was giddy—he thought his end was now really come. Away went the fish without a check, till his line was nearly run out, when Sandy, laying hold of the rope, holloaed to him to keep up his rod while he hauled him out. He must follow the fish on the bank, he told him; and the bewildered angler with the greatest difficulty battled his way, assisted by the rope, to the island, where Sandy, with presence of mind, cut it, and made the end fast round the youth's waist. Helping him then on to the main land, he bid him wind up quickly, and go down after the fish; but it was all up with Fribbles, he abandoned the rod to Sandy, and threw himself on the bank in a state of prostration.

It took Sandy some time to get in the couple of hundred yards of line; he did it, however, with hearty good-

will, feeling certain there was a good fish at the end of it. After much excitement, however, he lugged out a miserable little sea-trout, weighing under two pounds, which had had the ill-fortune to hook himself foul by the middle.

A long pull at his flask had restored Fribbles, in the meantime, to something like consciousness; and he returned the salutations of the gentlemen who came back to him with Sandy and the trout.

"You were quite right, sir," said one of the party, "not to give yourself the trouble. I really thought it was something *like* a fish you had caught; and I wondered at your not going on."

Well, it *is* a fish, is it not?" asked Fribbles, who had been too much upset to take any interest in the landing it.

"Only a small trout, you see," returned the traveller.

"I knew *that*, of course," replied the youth, recovering himself and looking big. "I knew it was only a small thing not worth *my* going after. I don't care for *small* fry," he continued magnanimously.

"May I ask," said another of the gentlemen, "if you find the anchor answer? It is the first time I ever heard of its being used in this way,—it appears inconvenient; but then, of course, it ensures your safety."

"It answers beautifully," replied Fribbles. "It is an invention of my own—it saves a fellow being carried down the river. A friend of mine, well known in the sporting circles, was actually carried out to sea by a salmon, and was picked up a long way from shore by a fishing-boat."

The gentlemen looked at one another.

"Carried out to sea?" cried one.

"Picked up by a fishing-boat?" cried another.

"A long way from shore?" exclaimed the third.

"Oh yes!" answered Fribbles, unwinding the line from his body; "he had his life-belt on, you know. It was in the Findhorn he was fishing, and he told me the fish was making for the coast of Sutherland."

"Permit me to make a note of that," said a little bustling ferret-eyed man, one of the tourists, pulling out a memorandum book and putting the pencil to his lips, to make it mark darker. "The Findhorn river, I think you said, sir; carried out to sea; picked up off the Sutherland coast by a fishing-boat; very extraordinary. I beg your pardon, sir," he continued, "but I am engaged in writing a tour in the Highlands of Scotland; you have, I suppose, no objection to my inserting this very remarkable adventure? The name of the gentleman, I think you said, was ——?"

"Well, I don't remember mentioning his name at all," said Fribbles; "but I have not the least objection to telling it you; he is a particular friend of mine, a member of my club, the Megatherium, his name is Fluffey. It is no secret; you can make what use you like of it; he told me the story as I tell it you; by-the-bye the weight of the salmon was about ninety pounds."

"A capital bit that for your book! Tommy!" said one of the gentlemen to the delighted cockney author in embryo.

"Bringing one's self to an anchor to fish!" exclaimed the third tourist; "I never saw it even alluded to in 'Bell's Life' or 'The Field;' what strange things one does hear and see in travelling to be sure!"

So, after many thanks for this valuable addition to their forthcoming volume, the tourists took their departure, and in due time, Fluffey, to his immense indignation, found himself chronicled by name as the hero of a marvellous tale, something in the Baron Munchausen style.

"And *this* is fishing!" Fribbles mentally soliloquised, as he lit a cigar, while Sandy and his colleague were pulling hard at a pipe of pig-tail, seated at some little distance from him. "If this is the recreation of a contemplative man, I'll have nothing to do with it, if I know it. This sort of life up here does not suit me—I have more than half a mind to cut it altogether—and, by Jove, it will be no fun next year when that Major What's-his-name has turned a lot of tigers loose about the place."

It may be that this somewhat sudden distaste of Fribbles for the sports of the field might be attributable to the circumstance of his finding it impossible to attain proficiency in the art as rapidly as he had anticipated; perhaps there was some other latent cause for it; howbeit, he announced after dinner that very day the fact of his having made up his mind not to go to Altnafoyle—he did not care for blue hares—not he—there were enough guns without him—he did not see how he was to get there comfortably—and after availing himself of every possible excuse for declining to go, he rather astonished his old friend by telling him that there was another impediment to his accompanying him, namely, an engagement he had made to go for a few days to Rogie.

"Rogie? where is that? I never heard of the place," said Brixey.

"Oh!" answered Fribbles, rather shyly; "Rogie is the place belonging—I thought you must have known *that*—to—you remember those nice people we met on board the steamer?—you know, they asked me to pay them a visit then—and as they have now repeated the invitation, I mean to go."

"You mean that Mr. Coventry—the man with a flashy wife and two rather forward daughters—oh yes! I remem-

ber them well enough—it was their room you were found in ——."

"Cromarty is the name," interrupted Fribbles; "I don't think Mrs. Cromarty was flashy, and I am certain the Miss Cromartys were anything but forward. I consider them a particularly agreeable family; Cromarty and I hit it off capitally; he is a first-rate fellow, and it is uncommon civil of him asking me to his house; of course I intend going."

"I must candidly admit," said Brixey, "I was not myself very greatly impressed in that gentleman's favour—however, there is no accounting for tastes. *You* do not know much about him, Peter, and we certainly cannot say much for *another* acquaintance we made on board the steamboat; *that* certainly was not a very creditable one; somehow it makes me suspicious."

"But this is a different case, altogether," returned Fribbles; "here is a gentleman travelling about with his family, asking me to his own country place. Downey was a regular scamp; I never half cottoned to him, and was deuced glad when he took himself off. A particularly nice ladylike person, Mrs. Cromarty."

"I have no doubt about it," said Brixey, and then he added significantly, "and the Miss Cromartys, eh, Peter?"

"Well, yes," Fribbles answered in as nonchalant a way as he could; "rather fine girls; I thought them rather nice."

"Very affected though," put in Brixey, "very affected, don't you think so, Peter?"

"No! dashed if I do!" answered the youth warmly "I never saw two girls who had less nonsense about them. You are prejudiced against the Cromartys; first of all you

don't like Mr. Cromarty; then you call the mother flashy, and then you abuse the girls ——."

"Peter," Brixey spoke solemnly, "you are now arrived at a time of life to act for yourself and to be guided by your own judgment, but, remember, you have not the same experience and knowledge of the world that I have. Something whispers to me, Peter, that this new friend of yours is not quite disinterested in cultivating your acquaintance in this manner. He has got daughters. I have heard and read of such things as hooking eligible young men.—Indeed, I distinctly recollect Captain Downey telling me one day on board the steamer——"

"Downey be hanged!" Fribbles broke in indignantly. "The idea of trying to hook *me!* ha! ha! too wide awake for that sort of thing! and then, what can he know about me! he would not be such an ass as to make up to a fellow for his daughters if he did not know something about him."

Brixey remembered now his having undergone formerly a mild but effectual course of pumping at the hands of the Père Cromarty, who had quietly extracted from him every particular connected with the youth's present means and future expectancies. It flashed upon him now, too, that he *had* observed a smooth oily manner of address in that admirable father of a family towards Fribbles, and he fancied he could recal the having noticed a proneness on the part of that young gentleman to bask in the sunshine of the Cromarty girls. His eyes were opened—he spoke his mind.

"Peter, I do wish you were not going to these people; take my word for it, that old gentleman has some design or other upon you."

Here the worthy man took a line the very reverse of the one likely to influence his young friend's actions. It was

the very worst suggestion he could have made, the implying any sort of doubt on the part of himself or of anybody else, as to the sagacity and acuteness of the self-satisfied youth. It was attacking him in his strong point.

"Well, I must say, this is not very flattering to me; I suppose you think me blind? You think I am to be walked round? Perhaps *other* people think differently; and as I happen to know from himself what Mr. Cromarty thinks of my judgment and knowledge of life, it is just the very last thing *he* would attempt to 'put a plant' upon me. Besides, I do not think it fair to suspect bad motives in a man's asking another to his house—at that rate there would be an end of visiting altogether."

"'Forewarned is forearmed!' Peter, the man has two daughters to marry. Take care you don't run your head into a noose; matrimony, my dear Peter, is a very solemn —and a very momentous—and a very mysterious affair. I cannot speak practically, of course; but, I have read a good deal, and thought a good deal, upon the subject. 'Marry in haste and repent at leisure.' Peter," Brixey continued, after giving this expression of his sentiments—he spoke feelingly on the subject—"you know I am your oldest friend. Is it likely I should interfere with any arrangements you may think proper to make, if I did not think I was acting for your own good?"

"Of course you would not; but I must say you are prejudiced. Now supposing—I only say supposing—I did take a fancy to one of these girls; well—what of it? Where is the harm? However, the real fact is that Mr. Cromarty has asked me to go to him just for a week's shooting, and the change will be rather pleasant. I am tired of the same thing over and over again—I am to go to-morrow, and shall be back in a few days."

"I am sorry for it," said Brixey, "you would have been safer here."

"Safer! there you go again!" cried the youth angrily; "however, the long and the short of it is, that I do not mean to affront a deuced good fellow by throwing him over, and I have ordered a dog-cart from Speytown for to-morrow."

"A wilful man must have his own way, Peter!" said Brixey, and with this trite remark he took his candle and retired to bed, leaving Fribbles in no very comfortable state of mind. There was in what his friend had said much that jarred upon his feelings. He had himself felt painfully conscious of there being a something not quite righteous in the dealings of the Papa Cromarty; he confessed to there being a "dodgy" sort of way in his proceedings, which he (Fribbles), with all his cleverness, could not make head against; that mystification about the two girls; the uncertainty under which he actually laboured at that very moment, as to which of the two he was engaged, perplexed him sorely, and but for the exalted opinion he entertained of his own sharpness and knowledge of the world, and for the inordinate conceit which stopped the ears of his understanding, he would perhaps have listened to the unquiet murmurings of his better genius, prompting him to look before he leapt. One proverb more to illustrate the youth's position: "None so blind as those that won't see."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

The ride to Altnafoyle—Highland poachers—Death of the stag—Introduction to a distinguished foreigner—What he said and did and sang, and what came of it.

On the following morning Fribbles took leave for a time of his old friend, and started with the greater part of his belongings for Rogie. His dreams had been of Minna Cromarty—all was now *couleur de rose* with him, and all the sombre doubts and misgivings of the evening before had melted away by the sunny influence of her radiant image.

"That boy is so headstrong," Brixey soliloquised, as he was preparing his tackle for fishing—he purposed, if possible, to get a fish to take with him the next day to Altnafoyle. "He is so headstrong and giddy, there is no holding him. I may be wrong, I hope I am—I do not like to think ill of any one—but it is clear to me that Mr. Cromarty has set a trap for him, and, it is almost equally certain, the boy will get caught in it." And then he went down to the river with Sandy on his labour of love; he had the satisfaction of killing a fine ten-pound salmon, and then returned home early to make his preparations for an early start the next day.

It was a bright, clear, fresh morning, when Brixey, after taking a cup of coffee and a biscuit, mounted his pony to ride across the hills. In one of the game bags he had stowed away a change of clothes, and the fish was carefully

packed in fresh heather in the other, to balance it. Sandy, who had borrowed a pony for the occasion, carried his master's gun. Their course lay for a considerable distance along the high ridge that formed the march of his shooting, and Brixey's spirits rose as he quaffed the delicious air of the mountains, while Sandy entertained him with stories about shooting and deer-stalking, and the adventures incident to a keeper's life. He saw, from this elevated spot, the tops of the high chain of mountains towards which they were bound, catch the first rosy tint of the sun, while all remained grey and cold below. Gradually the light vapours which hung over the corries disappeared, even as he looked upon them, and the long dark slanting shadows, lately so sharply cut on the hill sides, grew less and less defined, as they retreated before the increasing light, now less roseate, but still warm and life-giving.

They had to traverse an angle of the forest, along which was a track, presumed to be a right of way, and they had been following for some time the downward course of a rippling burn, in a narrow valley between two bare stony slopes. Sandy was in the middle of a long-winded story about the habits of the genus poacher in Scotland, which, keeper as he was, he described with something of enthusiasm, and even invested with a chivalrous sort of character —for, in truth, the Highland poacher is a very different class of person to the skulking, cowardly, night-walking, wire-setting, pot-shooting ruffian in the South. He was telling how the lads, may be from Badenoch or Lochaber, shot their way right across country from point to point, a party, perhaps, of ten rollicking, jolly ne'er-do-weels, making the foray almost as much for the fun of the thing as for the profit—how it was hopeless attempting to stop them—they laughed at keepers, and set the game laws at

defiance.——Suddenly, in the very middle of their track, arose, as it appeared, out of the ground, the figure of a man, who with impatient gesture barred their progress. He was a tall, surly-looking, hard-featured fellow, dressed in a well stained kilt of grey plaid, with a catskin purse; a battered grey lowland bonnet, pulled forward over the forehead to act as shade, darkened the upper part of his face, but in no way dimmed the flashing brightness of his fiery eyes, as he brought his heavy gun to bear upon Brixey with his finger upon the trigger.

A sort of deep guttural growl, degenerating into a hiss, issued from between the teeth of this formidable apparition, who, rushing forward, seized the bridle of Brixey's pony and backed it so violently as nearly to bring the rider over the animal's head. Sandy was off his steed in a second and in a low cautious whisper made some reply in Gaelic to the man as the latter, still grasping the bridle, was looking anxiously down the glen.

"Hey! what is the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Brixey, who had taken the opportunity to dismount.

"The de'il's in the doited auld carle!" growled the man, with an angry look, and then hissing some unintelligible words to Sandy, the latter whispered to Brixey to lie down on the ground and be quiet, while he, leading the two ponies rapidly back to a dry water course over which they had just passed, was lost to Brixey's sight. It was not pleasant being left thus, at the mercy of the uncouth savage, who knelt near him, and who, intent as he was in gazing down the corrie, turned his head every now and then, and regarded him with a look of mingled ferocity and alarm.

After a while the sharp ringing report of a rifle was heard in the direction to which the eager glance of the

man was turned, and while the echoes were still lingering in the hills, Brixey heard a heavy tramp of hoofs and a crash of stones on the slope above him; he looked upwards and saw two hinds dashing at a furious gallop along the hill side, followed, at a short interval, by a magnificent stag, whose tottering, unsteady pace showed plainly that he was badly wounded. It went to Brixey's heart to see the efforts made by the noble animal to come up with the hinds, who stopped once, for a moment, to look back before they were lost over the ridge. Every step seemed agony to the poor stag, as he reeled along the steep incline. He made an attempt to breast the hill, but staggered back exhausted, and lay down, throwing back his head till his splendid antlers touched the ground. Brixey could hear its deep-drawn sighs, for so the heavy breathing seemed to him.

In the meantime, another wild-looking man came up the glen, loading his rifle as he ran. A few words in Gaelic were exchanged, and the two men remained some minutes watching the dying animal, Brixey's neighbour the while keeping his gun raised and pointed. There was no need of this precaution. After a feeble effort or two to get upon its legs, the poor stag made one last desperate struggle—it was its last. Falling, as if suddenly paralysed, it rolled over, and before Brixey could rise, the two men were standing over their dead quarry. One of them, holding back the head, plunged his skene dhu up to its handle into the bottom of the neck, and then commenced the process of grallocking the monstrous animal.

Sandy now appeared with the ponies, and after some noisy discussion in Gaelic, he announced to his master that the two lads had impounded the borrowed 'powny' to carry away the deer.

"Eh! but, bless my heart," cried Brixey. "Steal the pony! it is a most unwarrantable act."

"What's yer wull, sir?" asked one of the men, in a civil tone; "we are wanting the pownie, and the laddie will hae to foot it the day; it's just gude luck meeting ye; an' if a bit vennison will be pleasing to ye, ye hae but to say the word; we'll be glad to be upsides wi' ye in the matter o' the pownie."

Brixey courteously declined the offer. He stopped a little to admire the wonderfully rapid and skilful manner in which the deer was prepared for carriage: he saw it thrown across Sandy's pony, and after passing round his flask, the two parties separated in all good fellowship, but not before he had agreed to become proprietor of the head, which was a singularly fine one of ten points, and was to be delivered to his address at the merchant's.

He learned from Sandy that the lads had been out since the gloaming of the last evening. "Deed, sir," he said, "but it's just gude luck for us we didna spoil the shot. It's a rough chiel, the bigger o' the twa."

"You know them then," said Brixey.

"Eh, no! sure, sir, it's no for me to know them," answered Sandy innocently; "but I hae my doubts to its being a certain person down west; an' he'd been sair fashed if we had scaured the deer."

"But tell me," said Brixey, "why did they not shoot the poor stag again, to put him out of his misery at once?"

"Because twa guns maks mair rowt than ane, an' the forester's house is east, an' the wind's in that airt, an' maybe anither shot might wake him."

"Oh, I see!" answered Brixey.

After a beautiful wild ride, enlivened by the merry crow

of the grouse, and the plaintive whistle of the golden plover, they arrived at an elevation which afforded them a lovely view over an amphitheatre of hills; and, in the midst of this, half buried in a dark plantation of firs, was the looked-for lodge. Striking now a track in the lower ground which led directly thither, Brixey was soon greeted with the hearty welcome of his expectant hosts, who introduced him to another guest of theirs, Monsieur le Marquis de Guimauve.

The Marquis was a fine specimen of a French sportsman; the first of that very remarkable genus Brixey had ever had the happiness to meet; he was greatly struck with his appearance, and captivated by his manner. Lifting from his head, to salute the new comer, a brown leather jockey cap with a broad straight shade, the Marquis discovered a head of dark hair cut close, and sticking up on end like a circular blacking-brush; whiskers and beard, cut equally close, formed a black frame to a long sallow face, on which a bland smile seemed stereotyped. He was habited in a long-waisted tight coat of brown velvet, with huge bronze buttons, which were works of art in their way, representing a series of sporting subjects. From various breast-pockets projected the several accessorial implements of the gun, and a carved ivory whistle was pendent from a button-hole. The extreme length of this garment hid all the intermediate man, revealing only a pair of leather leggings of great solidity, secured by an infinity of straps and buckles on a pair of very attenuated legs; and over these again, up to the ancle, were a pair of gaiters of finer and softer leather of the same yellow colour, fastened with a perfect eruption of buttons over varnished shoes of exquisite make and fit.

"You spik French, Meester Breeks?" inquired the distinguished foreigner, showing his teeth blandly.

On Brixey confessing that he was unhappily ignorant of that language, he replied, "It is nozing, Breeks! To me it is all as one!

"The Marquis speaks capital English," said Kilkee, quite like a native."

"Ah! Monsieur le Capitaine, you flat me!" Then turning again to Brixey, he said, "I shall make myself understand. You are amateur of ze chasse, Breeks?"

"Mais c'est un chasseur de première force—This gentleman is a first-rate shot," replied the Captain, not waiting for Brixey's denial.

"It is well," replied the foreigner; "and me—I am grand amateur."

"I am sorry, Mr. Brixey, it is not in my power to lodge you very comfortably," said Major Mysore to his guest, who was enjoying his breakfast with an appetite well known to those who have done ten miles across the hills upon a cup of coffee and a biscuit. "But we are ,badly off for bed-room accommodation," he continued.

"Did you ever sleep in a box in a cupboard, Mr. Brixey?" asked the Captain.

"Any thing will do for me. I could pass a night on the heather," answered Brixey cheerfully. He felt up to anything. His present happiness was such that he fancied nothing could put him out of his way.

"Monsieur le Marquis," the Major went on, "declares he never slept better."

"Moi? me?" exclaimed that individual with his mouth full. "Je dors—moi—comme un cochon. I slip me as one leetle pig in ze box. Breeks sall slip as one ozer leetle pig in ze ozer box. Ha! Ha! à la guerre comme à la guerre, Breeks!"

"I beg your pardon," said the latter, who had not an idea what was meant.

"The Marquis says," interpreted Kilkee, "that if you snore loud, he will snore louder. Bedad, he 's a dead hand at that same."

"Oh! I understand," replied Brixey; "we are to be neighbours, I suppose."

"At close quarters," said Kilkee. "The Marquis is in the berth above you."

"Ha! Ha! est-il question de ma naissance? will you spik of my beerse—of ma famille? Ze extraction of ze Guimauves is above—he is upstairs," observed the Marquis with dignity; and then relaxing a little, he said, "Ze famille also of Breeks is distinguished?"

"One of our most noble families," replied the Captain, in French.

"It is well," replied the illustrious foreigner, perfectly satisfied.

Major Mysore prided himself upon organisation. He had made all the men in his employ go through a course of drill which he had, after much study, brought to perfection. He had reduced "beating a cover" to a science, and every movement was executed by word of command. As soon as the gentlemen were ready, the gillies, about a dozen in number, were drawn up in line in front of the lodge, under the command of Corporal Bosher, an old soldier of the Major's regiment, who acted as major domo in the establishment, and aide-de-camp in the field. After calling their numbers, and going through certain manœuvres with their sticks, they formed two deep, and marched off, under the command of the Major.

The rest of the party were soon under weigh, and as the ascent began at no great distance from the lodge, and was

so steep as to be hardly accessible on horseback, they had thought it advisable to go on foot. The very first brae was so steep as to put a stop at once to the joyous bragging of the Marquis, who had started at a furious rate from the lodge, and had laughed at the more sober pace of Captain Kilkee and Brixey.

"Mais—c'est affreux," he exclaimed, as he looked up at the hill above him. "Je suis abimé—I am abecmed—I can no more—Je n'en peux plus."

"Courage! Courage! mon cher!" cried Kilkee; "you surely would not let that fat, pursy fellow beat you—he is trying hard to be up first," he continued, in French, pointing to Brixey, who was crawling on a little above them.

"Sapristie!" answered the Frenchman, making another start, but pulling up after a few paces. "Holà! Breeks, attendez! You shall see," he said *sotto voce*, to Kilkee—"you shall see—Breeks is before by-and-bye—you shall see Breeks behind after. Holà! mon cher," he called out again, "nous allons boire la petite goutte—we go to drink ze leetle gout." Brixey stopped, and after taking a mouthful of whiskey from a big wicker flask, suspended at the Frenchman's side by a green silk cord, with tassels to match, declared himself greatly revived. The Marquis, himself, after offering it to Kilkee, took then a long pull at it.

"A présent—en avant! aux armes!" he shouted. "Allons, Breeks!" and with these words he started off with long strides, which grew gradually more and more feeble, and again he halted to get up the steam by the same process as before. In the meantime Major Mysore, without looking back, breasted the hill with his men; and his long legs, having little to carry, did their work well. The Captain remained with the two visitors, and amused

himself in cheering them on—telling them they were just at the top—only one little bit more—and so on. Brixey was sadly blown, and would have given in, perhaps, but for the excitement of watching M. de Guimauve's progress. The latter, cased in a tight dress, and badly shod, contrived, by having constant recourse to his ample flask, to creep on, till they all arrived at the top of the mountain. Now whiskey, it is well known, while it gives a temporary strength to the limbs, operates very sensibly upon the head as well, especially when indulged in copiously at a high elevation.

Nothing could exceed the high spirits of the Marquis de Guimauve when he found himself landed at last. The first token he gave of his delight, after capering about strangely, was to burst out into a song:—

La nuit s'évapore,
Le jour vient d'éclore,
Et mon cœur encore
Soupire d'amour.

"Hola! mon cher Breeks! chantons;" and then a cracked, unsteady voice began to sing again, as loud as he could:—

Oh! viens, je t'appêlle
Mon adorable Adèle———

"Damn that fellow!" shouted the Major, who was marshalling his men at some distance. "I say, Kilkee, for goodness' sake———"

"Ha! ha! Monsieur le Major, nous voilà!" shouted the Frenchman, and then he went on:—

Ton ami fidèle
Attend ton retour.

The Major got furious. "For God's sake, Kilkee—throttle

that damned —; there won't be a head of game left. Holloa! Marquis—I say! Don't sing that song again."

"Qu'est ce qu'il dit, Monsieur Major—what says Major?"

"He says," answered Kilkee, quietly, "Chantez toujours—sing the song again:" and to the horror and indignation of the Major and the exquisite delight of Kilkee, the Marquis struck up again:—

Déjà sous l'ombrage,
L'oiseau du bocage,
Par son doux ramage
Chant son amour.

"Damn that Bedlamite!" roared the Major.

"Bravo, Marquis!" said Kilkee, aside. "C'est parfait! Encore une fois!"

Oh! viens je t'appêlle,
Mon adorable Adèle———

carolled the Marquis.

"Take the men off the ground!" gasped the Major, stamping with rage. "D'ye hear, Bosher? March the men to quarters."

"Right, face!" cried the corporal. "Left shoulders forward. March!" and to Brixey's astonishment he saw the men, with the corporal at their head, and Major Mysore at their side, disappear down the side of the mountain. He looked over the ridge and watched them in single file, progressing rapidly downwards, while he heard in the still air a prolonged growl issuing from the Major, as it grew fainter and fainter in the distance.

"Encore ce joli refrain! Give it him again, Marquis," said Kilkee, leading him to the brow of the hill, in order that he might be better heard by the descending party; and

again the Marquis, nothing loth, made the echoes resound with—

Ton ami fidele
Attend ton retour !

"Bedad! Marquis! you've done it, my boy!" cried Kilkee, rubbing his hands with delight. "You'll not find the Major accepting the very polite invitation. We may wait for his return long enough, Mr. Brixey. The Major is in a devil of a huff. He is off for good. I know him well enough. It is all up for to-day!"

"Eh! Mais dis, donc, mon cher Capitaine—mais c'est fameux, n'est ce pas? Le pauvre Major! Allons, Breeks, chantons——"

Malbrook s'en va t'en guerre-ra !

It is no use denying it, Monsieur le Marquis de Guimauve was very drunk—no mistake about it—and it had been better for him to have taken the pledge than to have been overtaken by whiskey on the top of a ptarmigan hill. We do not speak unadvisedly—we have seen such a consummation.

Luckily, Sandy had joined them, when the Major marched off with the rest of the men; and as there was now nothing left but to proceed downward, they endeavoured, with his assistance, to steady the devious steps of the French nobleman in his progress. The latter was at first too confident in his own powers to accept the proffered arm, and it was not till he had rolled over once or twice that he resigned himself helplessly to the situation. Under any other circumstances it would have been diverting enough to listen to the absurd rhapsodies uttered by the Marquis—to mark his assumption of gravity at one moment, and his careless "vive la bagatelle" gaiety at

another. Brixey found it was no joke for a *sober* man to pick his way down a steep incline over rough rolling stones. He tried going sideways—he tried going backward; at last he fairly sat down, and eased himself down in that posture, till he found that that method of locomotion had serious inconveniences.

Kilkee was obliged to take one arm, while Sandy supported the other. The Marquis, moving one leg before the other, mechanically, and singing snatches of French songs, or shouting vociferously in that language to his "cher Breeks"—his "ami Breeks," who was much too engrossed with his own affairs to trouble himself to reply. The Captain's good humour never deserted him. His having "got a rise" out of the Major, and the ridiculous plight of his two companions, afforded him the liveliest satisfaction. At one time he had serious thoughts of exciting the Frenchman against the Major for deserting them. He found, however, it was too late, it would be labour lost, for the former was now too far gone to comprehend him thoroughly. It was a thousand pities, he thought, that an extra mouthful of whiskey, more or less, should have cheated him of such a glorious chance of getting up a passage of arms between the two originals. Such a pretty quarrel spoiled!

"Regardez moi, donc, ce petit Breeks, qui descend sur son séant. Look me zat leetle Breeks. Ha! ha! Nous autres nous allons faire de même," exclaimed the Marquis, suddenly shaking off his two assistants, and sitting down on the ground. "Ohe, Breeks! mais lassez moi faire. Look me, now, Breeks!" Saying which he shot rapidly down a steep pitch of some thirty yards, on his back, nearly capsizing in his course poor Brixey, who was picking his way gingerly, right in his track. Finding that he

achieved this feat without accident, he was allowed to proceed thus for some time. It was an opportune rest for the Captain and Sandy; who, however, still remained near him, to keep him straight.

The results of this mode of travelling became soon manifestly injurious to that part of the clothing more immediately subjected to the friction over the sharp stony ground; and on Monsieur le Marquis hoisting signals of distress, and being put again upon his legs, it was discovered that it was not his elegant velvet coat only which had suffered most grievous degradation.

It was a very long and a very wearisome journey to the lodge; but they all got there at last without any more important accident than the picturesque one just recorded. The Captain speedily appeased Major Mysore, by giving a highly coloured sketch of the events of the morning, and the cause of his indignation. The illustrious foreigner was put to bed in his berth, and the remainder of the party forgot all their troubles, and passed a social evening.

Brixey did not pay the attention he could wish to have done, to some very wonderful and interesting stories related by the Major about elephant-shooting and pig-sticking. His eyes were heavy, and being introduced to his berth, he fell asleep at once, in spite of the nasal melody of his distinguished chum, Monsieur le Marquis de Guimauve.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

A Preface—Fribbles is hospitably received at Rogie—A parent's bereavements and sorrows—Sympathy therewith—A stranger—And what he talked about at dinner.

How many of us have gone to bed at night with the stern purpose of following a certain line of action on the morrow? Our last thought before leaving the substantial world for the realm of dreams has been, to deviate in no way from the course deliberately chosen, and carefully considered; and yet the morning has found us vacillating, irresolute, perchance timid, so utterly changed does everything appear in the light of day from what it was the night before. The path selected for our morrow's career—be it of duty, or pleasure, or enterprise, or honour, or profit, which loomed so straight and even and inviting in the distance a few hours since, seems now devious, and rough, and repulsive to our waking gaze. The castle we have reared so solidly, so substantially, turns out to be only "the baseless fabric of a vision."

Fribbles's resolution to pay a visit to the Cromartys was not taken impulsively; he was not surprised into accepting the invitation; the bare idea of declining it or even of putting it off for a time had never once entered his head, and yet it came to pass that as the distance decreased between himself and Rogie, his disinclination to arrive at that place increased in inverse proportion. His thoughts

were tossed about in a sea of doubt—one here, one there, jostling against each other, but eluding any attempt of his to connect them in such a way as to enable him to reason clearly. More than once it came across him whether it might not be better to turn back, to give up his visit altogether, to write an excuse, and fly from the unknown danger before him.

Onward rolled the wheels which were conveying him rapidly to the spot he now wished was miles farther off. Neither horse nor driver entered at all into his feelings; how the brutal fellow at his side urged the poor beast forward! he has even the heart to inform Fribbles that Rogie will be "just a mile and a bittock mair." If the horse would but fall down, he would almost compound for an upset to delay the dreaded moment—but—why should he apprehend anything? After all (so he comfortably reasoned with himself), he was not a fool. He was not the sort of fellow to be forced into taking any step he did not like, not he indeed!—and then, was not Minna Cromarty expecting him—him, Peter Fribbles—perhaps looking forward with delight to his arrival—how could he disappoint her?

Like the bather, who, shivering on the river bank, looks at the dark stream into which he is about to take a header, and, though he longs to be floating in the cool element, dreads the first plunge—even so Fribbles sighed to be in the presence of the object of all his thoughts, and yet a dull apprehension of evil made him wish himself back again at Tommiebeg. Such was the conflict in his mind, when the dog-cart suddenly stopping, he found the reins in his hand and the driver already down and opening a gate—the horse turned through it of his own accord, and the man jumping up again, they were grinding along a

neat gravel road through a laurel plantation. Before Fribbles could realise the situation, the drive opened upon a well-kept lawn, and before him was a comfortable-looking house, of no great pretensions as to size, but having a respectable, well-to-do aspect. They drove up to the door, and ringing at the bell, a lad appeared in a smart livery, which a critical observer might have called a few sizes too big for him; but, nevertheless, very imposing if not aristocratic.

Before Fribbles could descend he was greeted by the mellow, cheery voice of his old acquaintance, Cromarty, whose reception of him was really something delightful, so frank, so cordial, so kindly. The youth felt exactly what his excellent host wished him to believe, that he was conferring a favour instead of receiving one.

"And tell me," said Cromarty, "how did you leave that very agreeable old friend of yours—quite well? I am rejoiced to hear it—Delightful person—very! (the two gentlemen had never exchanged half-a-dozen words). So good of him to spare you to us for a week or two—Come along my dear fellow," he shook Fribbles again warmly by the hand as he said these words, "charmed to see you, Mrs. Cromarty and Ada will be charmed to see you—we shall be charmed all of us!"

Following his host he found himself in presence of the Mama Cromarty, who was in an elegant *pose* at a tambour frame, engaged in putting some touches of floss silk into the eyes of a noble cockatoo in worsted work, while Miss Cromarty was seated at a table in the bay window drawing some flowers, elegantly arranged, in a tall narrow vase before her. The latter jumped up and flew to meet the gentleman, but suddenly hesitating, she stood still for a second, as if to recover herself, and then

advanced to greet the new comer. Fribbles's reception at the hands of the elderly lady was most friendly.

"It is *so* good of you, Mr. Fribbles, so ke-ind of you, really, to come and enliven us a little; we are bound, Ada dearest, to do all in our power to make ourselves agreeable, and induce Mr. Fribbles to prolong his visit. It is *so* unlucky——"

"Now, my dear," her husband interrupted her, "I know what you were going to say—you were thinking of the lame carriage-horse, I know. Well, it *is* unfortunate—there is no denying it—as it must prevent our using the barouche or the close carriage till Anderson sends us another horse."

"Really, my dear, *that* never once occurred to me. I was at the moment thinking rather of"—Mama was again stopped.

"My dear love! I do beg of you—our friend Fribbles will take us as he finds us. It is very provoking, I admit; but after all, what does it signify?"

"I am sure—a—if I—" stammered Fribbles; "that is—I hope——"

"Well," said the Cromarty, "I should not have thought of mentioning the thing to you, though it is unlucky: but it will not affect our dear friend's comfort in any way. The fact is, Peter—I may, I think, take that liberty—we have been obliged to part rather suddenly with our butler—too much confidence—too careless—all my own doing—a case of Moët and Chardon gone! every bottle! So you must, my dear fellow, put up with table wines, while I do duty as butler. My wife wanted me to put you off; but, says I, our friend Fribbles is not the man to stand upon ceremony—too much sense—too much a man of the world for that nonsense. It was dear Ada, though, that

made that judicious remark," he added, looking blandly at his first-born.

This free and easy manner of his host had the desired effect of putting Fribbles, who had at first the appearance of being scared, completely at his ease.

"Now," said the old gentleman, looking at his watch, "your drive will have given you an appetite—not that a young fellow like you requires any provocation. The gong will sound in a quarter of an hour for lunch. Suppose we go and see your quarters. We cannot put you up very luxuriously, but you will take the will for the deed. You have a hearty welcome, and we will do our best to make you comfortable——"

"In this wild country, Mr. Fribbles," put in Mrs. Cromarty, "we can get positively nothing. We cannot have everything as nice as we could wish, but ——"

"Oh, dear, Mama," exclaimed the young lady chidingly, "Mr. Fribbles, I see, is quite vexed at your making fine speeches to him. He knows he is among friends who are glad to see him——"

"Dear girl!" said Papa Cromarty, affectionately, as he opened the door for his guest to pass. "So like her! That girl is a treasure, Fribbles!" he continued, as they mounted the staircase. "She is all in all to her dear mother and myself."

The youth thought, but did not say, that her sister ought to count for something in the sum total of Mr. and Mrs. Cromarty's felicity.

Fribbles now found himself introduced into a comfortable, well-appointed bedroom, where his effects had already been deposited. On the dressing-table was a vase of roses.

"Ho! ho!" exclaimed the Cromarty, pointing to the bouquet. "The sly puss! I see it now. Never told me

a word about what she was cutting my best buds for. Ah! my dear young friend, you will know one of these days what it is—it *is* painful—very—but it *must* be. You are too young, my dear young friend, to enter into the feelings of a parent. Ah! 'tis hard to see his dear ones plucked one by one from his bosom and transplanted into that of another ——"

"Well, I should think it was—uncommon hard!" said the youth.

"But after all," resumed Cromarty, "why should he repine, if his children are happy? he should rejoice in their happiness."

"And so he ought, and no mistake!" said Fribbles.

"But it is a trial—a sad trial," resumed the Papa Cromarty, in melancholy accent. He was fishing for a little sentiment.

"Well, I should think it was—no end," sympathised the youth.

"Now, you could not possibly imagine, my dear Peter, the pang inflicted on a fond parent's heart by the sight of that poor little offering of flowers. It used to be the small, but exquisitely touching, tribute of affection paid by the dearest of girls to her doating father. That vase was a present I made dear Ada at Frankfort last summer, on her twenty-fourth birth-day. Every morning I used to find it on my dressing-table, filled with the choicest flowers of the garden. A love of flowers is one of my weaknesses, and the dear child ministered to it. And *now—now* I shall look for it in vain."

"Oh! dash it, you know," exclaimed Fribbles, "if you like to have it, you may carry it away with you now. It is very pretty, and all that, but I don't care much about flowers."

Old Cromarty could have kicked him, but he did not, and said pathetically, "Never! no never! It is my darling's offering to a cherished friend. You would not, surely, cast it from you? Oh, no! you *could* not—you would not wound the dear girl's feelings—you are too good a fellow for that. But lunch will be ready directly. You must look sharp."

So saying, Mr. Cromarty left his guest to his meditations. "That fellow is as hard as a nail," he soliloquised, as he descended the stairs. "Nothing but a hammer will clench him."

"What a fuss the old gentleman makes about a booky of flowers!" thought Fribbles. "Well, they *are* pretty—there's no denying *that*—and I *do* take it uncommon civil of Miss Cromarty putting them here." And then he wished it had been her sister who had paid him that delicate attention. Perhaps she *had* gathered some of them, and helped to arrange them, and he hoped it might be so, as he stooped to smell the roses. He looked at them with more of interest. His reflections were interrupted by the most alarming sounds he had ever heard. Now the din swelled, and seemed to approach nearer; then it died away, only to burst out afresh. Why did the sound of the gong, which is rather an uproarious signal in a house of small dimensions, recal to him, in all its horrors, the famous incantation scene in Der Freischutz?

Conceiving this to be the summons to lunch, he joined the party below stairs, and they proceeded to the dining-room, where a substantial meal was set out, but to his surprise, there were only four places at the table—where was Minna?

So completely taken aback was the youth at this unlooked-for absence of the one of the family, to whom all his

thoughts had been directed, that he must have shown some symptoms of perturbation of mind. Not giving him time for speculating on this, Mr. Cromarty kept the conversation going, while the attention paid him by the two ladies overwhelmed Fribbles at first, but had the effect of making him shortly perfectly satisfied with himself and his neighbours. No allusion was made to the younger daughter by any of the family, and Fribbles could not pluck up courage sufficient to hazard an enquiry after her.

It is not easy for a strong-minded individual to steel himself against a battery of well-planted and well-served flattery. A shot or two *will* tell in spite of his triple mail —the "robur et æs triplex"—and like as the outer man of Fribbles was cased only with light summer tweed, so was his mind ill-protected against the steady fire of pretty compliments kept up at him. He found himself the great man of the party—his opinions were deferred to—his advice asked—his tastes were applauded—his sayings were voted *so* good. How could he fail to take a fancy to those who elevated him thus in his own estimation?

The afternoon was devoted to showing him the place and neighbourhood. Accompanied by the father and daughter, Fribbles was taken a long walk to a famous hill, from which the Moray Frith and the mountains of Sutherland and Ross-shire were visible. Miss Cromarty pointed out to him the different objects, calling his attention to this point of view, and that beautiful opening, and the effect of light and shade thrown over the landscape, for all of which the youth gave credit, though he saw, like Sir Charles Coldstream in the play, "nothing in it."

Blind, however, as he was to the beauties of the scenery, and impenetrable as he was to the assaults made upon his feelings to admire the sea, and the mountains, and the sun-

shine, and the shadow, he was not proof against the delicate attentions lavished on him by his fair *cicerone*. He was surprised at the extent of the Cromarty property, too.

"Now, just look here, Fribbles," said the laird, as they stood upon an elevation commanding a wide extent of country. "I want to show you the *carte du pays*—the geography of the place. You have your shooting all round you. You see that clump of firs," he continued, pointing to a plantation some miles distant. "That is my march on the north. All this ground on the left here makes two or three good beats; and then we go a long way beyond that hill on the west. You have plenty of work cut out for you."

"Oh, Papa, that is *too* bad of you! I suppose you are going to engross Mr. Fribbles entirely. Dear Mama and I have been looking forward to his visit, and now I suppose you will be taking him away for your horrid shooting, and all we shall see of you both will be two tired, sleepy sportsmen, too hungry to talk at dinner, and too drowsy to keep your eyes open in the evening."

Poor Fribbles could only blurt out some very silly acknowledgment of the compliment.

"Oh, I forgot, Papa, you have asked that odious little man, Mr. M'Scourie to dinner to-day. How could you? I *hate* him."

"My dear girl, you really must not. Mr. M'Scourie is a very good young man—a man of very prepossessing manners, and of very considerable property." Mr. Cromarty had some reason to laud this gentleman, who was the owner of a large estate in the neighbourhood, over which he had given him the right of shooting. He was an admirer of his younger daughter as well, and if, on the

occasion of this visit, he was destined to be disappointed (as was Fribbles) at the absence of that young lady, it may be inferred that the far-sighted Papa must have had some good reasons for her being out of the way at this moment.

At the sound of the gong, Fribbles, descending to the drawing-room, was introduced to a smooth-faced, dapper little man, whose age it might have been hard to fix. If he was forty, he would be considered a very well-preserved, middle-aged man. But he might have been only thirty, and, if so, was decidedly old-looking. There was a quiet twinkle in his eye when he was made known to Fribbles, who felt disposed to look upon him rather as an intruder on his manor, and showed that he did so.

"I hope, Miss Cromarty, you have quite got over your fright on board the steamer," said Mr. M'Scourie, after they were seated at table.

"Fright, Mr. M'Scourie. What do you mean

"Just the fright, when that lang doited loun was caught in the leddies' cabin. I'd like to hae seen him when the stewardess kickit him out."

"M'Scourie! a glass of wine!" said Cromarty, hastily. "I want you to give me your opinion on that sherry. I think you will like it—it is a very dry. There is a sweeter wine on the sideboard, if you prefer it. Fribbles, will you join us?"

The youth, who was the colour of a peony, helped himself to a half a tumbler full, and drank it off, to hide his face in the glass.

"You had plenty of adventures in your travels, Miss Cromarty," resumed the visitor. "At Aberdeen——"

"Well, what do you think of that wine, M'Scourie?" asked Cromarty, interrupting his friend rather abruptly. "Well, I agree with you. Oh! by the way, my dear" (address-

ing himself to the lady of the house), "our friend Fribbles was delighted with that view of the sea—eh, Fribbles? nothing like that at Tommiebeg. My friend Fribbles has taken Tommiebeg, M'Scourie; you know it well, I suppose. I never asked you if you had had any good fishing, Fribbles. A fine river the Spey. You are a salmon fisher, —eh, M'Scourie?"

There are some people who cannot take a hint, there are also some who will not. M'Scourie did not belong to the former category. He had more than a suspicion about the state of things, and was naturally anxious to be certain of his ground; so, after answering a question or two, he returned to the subject broken off so suddenly.

"They tell me the poor de'il of a porter at the hotel is gone daft since seeing the lang ghaist; crying naething a' the day, but only just 'The Bogle! The Bogle!'"

Mrs. Cromarty and her daughter, in order to create a diversion, now left the room.

Fribbles's peace of mind was gone. How he hated that Scotch fellow. There was no vengeance too terrible he would not take, if he had a chance. Then again on joining the ladies in the drawing-room, the odious M'Scourie did nothing but talk and laugh—confound him! the whole evening. To crown the amiable youth's happiness, he heard his aversion agree to pass the night at Rogie, as it rained hard. This had the effect of giving him a bad headache, and he retired to bed in a state bordering on delirium.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

More eaves-dropping—The effect of "Twenty" Port—Projects of travel—A double revenge—The best time of the day for business—A professional man drops in unexpectedly—Settlements—Fixing the Day.

"WHAT do you say now, Cromarty? *I* say what I always said. That young man is a fool. Ada is much too good for him." We claim again our Asmodean privilege of listening to a conjugal *tête-à-tête*. "If I had *my* way, I would give him his *congé* directly."

"Now, my dear, *do*—*do*, pray, be reasonable. Granted he is—well—a fool, if you like—he is to be managed all the easier."

"I am not so sure of that, Cromarty. I did not like the way in which he went on to-night—his ill-humour was intolerable. If Mr. M'Scourie had not been very good-natured we should have had a scene. I wonder you did not interfere."

"And so spoil one of the prettiest combinations imaginable."

"Combinations, Mr. Cromarty?"

"Combinations, Mrs. Cromarty—I have said it. Now look here, my dear. You see these two gentlemen are *rivals*——"

"Rivals! Nonsense! You know well enough M'Scourie is head over ears in love with Minna."

"Perhaps he is—perhaps he is not. But does it not

enter into your wise head, my dear, that he *may* have come —mind, I only say *may* have come—to propose to Ada?"

"I now begin to see. Cromarty, you were born to be a diplomat."

"Looking at it in this light, my dear, only observe how delightfully we progress. Fribbles will never forgive M'Scourie's allusion to the *escapades* on the steamer and at Aberdeen——"

"Oh, Cromarty! don't—I shall die—was ever anything so truly ridiculous, as his bringing up that——"

"Well, it *was* rather rich. But, my dear, I really am surprised at your want of—a—I may say your want of prudence—yes, prudence, my dear. And Ada's behaviour was very reprehensible indeed—very."

'It is no use finding fault with us, Cromarty; I should have died on the spot if I had remained in the room, and Ada, poor dear, nearly laughed herself into hysterics in the drawing-room. Well, but what is your next move?"

"Our next move, Mrs. Cromarty—our next move? Well, M'Scourie tells me he must leave us before breakfast. That will be, of *course*, *after* his having proposed to me for Ada's hand, which, as *she is engaged* to another person, I shall have the painful duty of refusing. Do you see, my dear?"

"Cromarty, you are a perfect Machiavel;" and Machiavelli himself never slept sounder after developing some subtle scheme of politics than did the worthy Cromarty after broaching his system of domestic intrigue.

The object of his scheming passed a wretched restless night. His waking thoughts were all of that detestable M'Scourie, who he felt satisfied had brought forward these unpleasant episodes in his history on purpose to annoy him; his perturbed slumbers presented that gentleman to

him in the most hateful forms, and he woke from his fitful sleep twenty times to hear the rain beating against the windows, and to ponder on the misery of being thrown again into the society of the enemy of his repose. Fribbles felt himself capable of anything; he would affront the fellow, he would make the place too hot for him.

He got up the next morning unrefreshed and full of vengeful thoughts which were all suddenly put to flight. Hearing the grating of wheels upon the gravel road he looked out of his window to see the man he was thinking of drive off in his gig from the house. He felt better at once, and was able to wear an almost cheerful face when he joined his hosts below; he was again the fêted guest.

The weather necessitated the remaining in-doors. Fribbles was soon to be seen enacting the "tame young gentleman," holding skeins of silk which never *would* run off freely, for Miss Cromarty, mending pens for the old lady, guessing riddles, squaring words, and after a while was playing draughts with the young lady in the bow-window. Fribbles hated chess, he said, he never could learn the moves. The rain cleared off after lunch, and Cromarty having important letters to write, and Mrs. Cromarty being afraid of the damp, Fribbles went out for a walk with Miss Cromarty till dressing time.

"Now, Fribbles, make yourself at home," said Cromarty, as soon as the ladies had left the dinner table; "I thought a bit of fire would be comfortable this damp day. Take that arm-chair, draw it round and help yourself. That port is, I may fairly say it, a very fine glass of wine; I have only a few bottles left of the old 'Twenty,' and I only give it to those I love."

The port was good, and the youth showed his appreciation of it by the way he took it.

"I was deeply grieved, deeply grieved yesterday," said Cromarty, passing the decanter to his guest, "at that stupid fellow making any allusion to the accident on the steamer; I have discovered it was my silly girl, Minna, who made a funny story of it, and was indiscreet enough to mention it to him. I had expressly forbidden her making a joke of your misadventure; it was unlucky, very. Now *how* differently dear Ada behaved," he continued, after giving Fribbles time to ruminate for a minute or two. "Help yourself, we can manage another bottle between us," and he produced from the sideboard a fresh decanter.

"As I was observing," he went on, "that dear girl always stood up for you, and quarrelled, positively quarrelled with her sister for laughing at the affair; *just* like her, always *so* fearful of hurting the feelings of any one.—Not that I think M'Scourie could have purposely alluded to the story; he *might* not have been aware of your being the individual."

"Well, it's my belief he did it on purpose!" exclaimed Fribbles, savagely, "I thought so at the time and I think so now."

"Poor fellow," said Cromarty, "he is miserable enough now—you have your revenge."

"Have I though?" cried Fribbles; "dash it! I only wish I knew how to pay him off."

"Do not be *too* hard upon him, poor fellow," said Cromarty, feelingly; "do not be too hard, you have already given him a blow that he will not get over for some time; I was really sorry; it went to my heart to dismiss him, and he seemed to feel it acutely. He is really not a bad fellow and offered to make a very handsome settlement on dear Ada, and under other circumstances I might have received him with open arms as a son-in-law. Help yourself, my

dear fellow," he went on, "you are taking no wine." Mr. Cromarty could not have been looking, for, in fact, his guest had been taking a good deal.

"Son-in-law!" exclaimed the youth, "why he hasn't—"

"Yes, indeed he has; he has offered his hand to my darling Ada, who refused him of course, and I was under the painful necessity of informing him of her engagement to you—he had no idea of it—and, as I told you before, you have your revenge—eh? don't you think so?"

"My engagement to her—that is, I mean, her engagement to me!" exclaimed Fribbles, whose apprehension was not so misty as not to take in the meaning of the words.

"Exactly, I could not help telling him," answered Cromarty, calmly; "otherwise I think engagements of this sort are better not talked about. Not that it signifies much in our case, my dear Peter; nothing untoward is likely to happen with us; I was obliged to tell him that my darling Ada and yourself had been engaged for some time; it was better to be frank, do you not think so yourself? Come, one more glass; that's right. God bless you, my boy, may you both be happy! Suppose now we join the ladies; tea has been announced long ago, but we were so happy here; time passes quickly when one is pleasantly occupied. Steady! steady!" he said in an encouraging tone, as Fribbles clumsily swept a glass off the table. "Never mind, old fellow, it was made to be broke."

That evening was spent by the youth in looking over a portfolio of prints with Ada Cromarty, and schemes of travel were talked over, and he was giving a passive assent to passing summers in Switzerland and winters in Italy. It would be *so* nice for her to be his guide, she had Murray's Handbook at her fingers' ends. It was *so* lucky too, dear Peter liked this plan, because perhaps in the

spring dear papa might be able to arrange to run over and join them for a month or two on their tour. It would be *so* delightful, and Fribbles agreed that it would be uncommon delightful, and he went to bed with a dim perception of being engaged to be married to Ada Cromarty, and a confused recollection of making a tour by Switzerland and Venice to the Rhine, and so on to Paris, taking Naples and Munich on the road.

It was to no purpose that Fribbles tried on the following morning to call to mind the events which had led to these very important arrangements. The results were sufficiently impressed upon his memory, but how they came about he could in no wise satisfy himself. He must have proposed to Ada Cromarty without being aware of it, and certainly without intending it, but he *had* proposed and had been accepted. He wondered whether he had fixed a day for the event to come off; most likely he had, because it was settled that they were to go abroad immediately. How could he have been so precipitate? He would like to have consulted his old guardian, besides which it would have been but proper and dutiful, and "the right thing and all that," to have communicated his intentions to his mother. However, there he was committed—he must needs accept the situation.

There were, however, one or two circumstances that contributed in no small degree to reconcile him to his position. First and foremost was the deadly blow he should inflict on that fellow M'Scourie in cutting him out, and carrying off Ada Cromarty. Secondly, the adroit introduction by old Cromarty of the joke made of his misadventures by the younger daughter had not failed to work out its purpose; it had wounded the youth in his tenderest point, and had irritated him against her to such an extent, as to make him

look forward with savage delight to the misery he was now going to cause her, by transferring his affections to her sister.

He could not help, in the meantime, making a retrospect of his life since the time of his joining his friend Brixey in taking a shooting in Scotland; he could not help reflecting how that by some extraordinary concatenation of events he had been in continual "grief," as he called it; no sooner was he out of one scrape than he found himself in another, and never by any fault of his own; and now here he was impelled, he knew not how, to take the most important step in life, without meaning it; it was not unnatural that he should speculate now on what was to happen next.

If misfortunes never come single, it must be admitted that the converse is sometimes the case, and so it was by the luckiest coincidence in the world that Mr. Cromarty's man of business should happen to be desirous, at that particular moment of time, to consult his client touching the purchase of a very desirable property in his neighbourhood, and a letter by the morning's post announced his forthcoming visit.

"How strangely things do happen in this life," remarked Cromarty, folding up the letter and laying it by him. "Now here, of course, there are certain dry matters of business in matrimonial affairs which must be got over—preliminaries only—merely things of form—but still they must be gone through—everybody goes through them—it is almost part of the ceremony. For my own part," he went on, "I hate the sight of a lawyer, don't you, Fribbles? But they are necessary evils, eh? Well, you see, here is Pitsligo writes to me he is coming to me this very day—singular, is it not?—*this very* day. You never met him, I think. A most respectable man, Pitsligo. He says he wants to talk over a considerable purchase I hope to make

on my march. Just as well kill two birds with one stone, eh? To be sure there is no reason—none in the world—to hurry these things over; besides, between us there is no need of much in the way of parchments, but for the form's sake, it looks better—don't you think so? One must conform to the usages of society."

Fribbles agreed with him that it would not do to shock the world by running counter to its prejudices, and then he went out shooting with his host, and the day passed away pleasantly.

It is no less curious than true, that whenever it is desirable to transact any business of importance, which might entail a disagreeable discussion or give rise to uncomfortable complications, there is no time of day so admirably adapted for it as the interval between dinner and bedtime. It is astonishing how the soothing and benign influence of the table can soften the asperities and round off the rough edges of impediments which in the morning have appeared insurmountable.

In illustration of this, only contrast the vestry meeting convened to take into consideration the propriety of levying a farthing rate for the purpose of repairing the old neglected tumble-down tower of the parish church of Tadpole in the Marsh, with the public dinner at the Royal Oak in the same parish to promote the erection of a new Town Hall in the High Street. Any one who had listened to Podder's speech whenever he denounced the lavish expenditure, the enormity of the outlay, the reckless extravagance advocated by Wiggins in his base proposition to gild the old weathercock on the steeple, would scarcely recognise in Podder the man who, with face beaming with every social virtue, carelessly puts his name down for ten pounds in the book passed round after the "Town Hall Dinner."

Social meetings thus got up, with a dinner—*always* with a dinner, for the outpouring of generous, liberal, patriotic, enlightened feelings, ought to be considered as among our most valuable national institutions; and in like manner, may the social meal be made subservient to the development of private virtues. This, it may be inferred, was the conclusion arrived at by Mr. Cromarty, when, after the ladies had retired, he introduced another bottle of port, and the subject uppermost in his mind.

"Pitsligo," said he, clearing his voice in an imposing manner, "you must join me in a toast—a— It is with pleasurable feelings I rise—that is—ha! ha! You will excuse my getting upon my legs, to propose to you the health of my esteemed friend Mr. Peter Fribbles, and when I couple with his name that of my dearest daughter Ada, you will draw the—a—conclusion, I doubt not, that I shall soon recognise my young friend by a nearer and dearer title. My acquaintance with the gentleman opposite, though it does not date from a very remote period, has speedily ripened into feelings which I cannot—a—adequately describe. Genuine and sterling worth soon makes itself known, and from the many opportunities I have had of forming an estimate of the—a—excellent qualities, the—a—noble tendencies, and the fine, manly, generous, frank, and confiding character of my young friend, I am brought to the conviction —and I am not readily disposed to judge lightly and hastily and inconsiderately—that in receiving him as my son-in-law, I ensure the happiness and—a—the future felicity—of my darling child. I need not tell you that my daughter has been sought—a—in a manner most flattering to the feelings of a father by many individuals whose pecuniary advantages, and—a—position, and rank might have captivated the fancy of a worldly, selfish man. No! it is not wealth, it is

not rank, that constitutes happiness. High principles, generous sentiments, fine disposition—a—are the qualities calculated to ensure contentment—*with* a competence—a—we must not forget that—*with* a competence. All these admirable endowments are possessed by my young friend. Don't hammer the table with the handle of your knife, Pitsligo, you will dent it. As I was about to remark—ah! my feelings are too many for me, they are really," and the old gentleman, after hiding his face in his napkin for some seconds, continued, "I give you the health of my friend Mr. Fribbles and Miss Cromarty."

The toast was received with enthusiasm by the man of business, who said "he wushed the young people would be just as happy as their virtues, and their merits, and their parteecular qualities, and the verra respectable competence, duly set forth, would doutless mak' them."

Fribbles would have responded in a neat speech, but he broke down at the outset, and contented himself with expressing his thanks in rather confused and unintelligible words.

"It *is* the luckiest thing in the world, Pitsligo, you happened to be this way just now. My young friend there is naturally—very naturally anxious to get over all the nonsense you men of the law always contrive to hamper one with on occasions like the present—eh? Fribbles—impatient, eh? So was I—so was I, when I was going to be married—never was easy a moment till the nuisance of signing and sealing was over, and we had got rid of the lawyers—eh? Pitsligo, always the case, eh?"

Fribbles, whose utterance was a trifle thick, expressed his detestation of lawyers, and wished them, he said, at blazes.

"Did not I say so? He wants to be rid of you, Pitsligo

—that is, in a professional sense—only a professional sense —eh! Fribbles?"

"Certainly—only profesh-nal sense," replied the youth.

"To expedite matters, Pitsligo, I think you might prepare a draft of the settlements—you know how crippled I am just at this moment with the purchase of that property, for which I shall have to sell out nearly all my Three per Cents. But my young friend knows me—knows me well —one of these days—get it all in a lump—eh! Fribbles? But you will not wish me to die, eh?"

"Nev'r say die!" shouted the young man.

"That is right—a noble sentiment!" said Cromarty.

"I'll be for taking Mr. Fribbles's instructions just now," said the lawyer.

"I shan't give 'nstrucshuns—go to old Crom'ty frinstruchuns."

"And that's verra leeberal and verra conseederate—and if you're willing I'll just prepare the draft the nicht."

"Or-right olfella!" were the words with which Fribbles gave his assent; and as this document happened, singularly enough, to be all the time in Mr. Pitsligo's pocket, in the shape of a covenant engaging Fribbles to settle six thousand pounds on his future bride, with sundry provisions thereanent, the business was concluded to Fribbles's great satisfaction, for he was very sleepy; so much so, that he had great difficulty in sitting up to write his name.

Nothing now remained but to fix the day; and here again Fribbles found that all the trouble was taken off his hands. His father-in-law, that was to be, was all kindness, and in deference to Fribbles's eager desire to be made happy —not that the youth had, he thought, ever expressed any such impatience, at least he did not remember it if he

had done so—named Michaelmas-day as an appropriate one for the wedding.

While the happy bridegroom elect was passing his time pleasantly enough at Rogie, his conscience smiting him occasionally with having neglected writing to his old friend Brixey, and imparting to him the happiness in store for him, the latter gentleman had struck up an intimacy with the eccentric occupants of Altnafoyle. He sent home for his kit, and passed some time there: after which he took Captain Kilkee back with him to Tommiebeg. He had an uncomfortable misgiving touching his young friend Peter Fribbles, from whom he had heard nothing since he started for Rogie, but consoled himself with the reflection that "no news is good news."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

An early passage in the history of the Cromarty Family—Brixey arrives in time for a wedding breakfast—Goes through the inventory at Tommiebeg—And gives up the Lodge—A word about Moors in general, and a Moral.

"At last!" exclaimed Brixey one morning, examining the address of a letter just put into his hand. Kilkee was reading "Bell's Life" at the window. "That boy has written at last to say he is coming back, I hope; and I am very glad of it. Eh! what! Bless my heart!" he went on as he read the contents,—"Married! nonsense!—can't be! Why, he is but a child. He is not five-and-twenty yet."

"Who did you say was going to be married?" asked Kilkee, who had been so absorbed with his paper that he had only caught the last few words.

"Why, my young friend, Peter Fribbles; but I don't believe a word of it; the thing is impossible—the people, too, are strangers to him."

"And who, if I may ask, is the lady he is going to make happy?"

"A Miss Cromarty."

"Miss Cromarty!" cried the Captain, showing strong symptoms of interest,—"not one of old Rogie's girls?"

"Rogie! why that is where he is staying; it is the name of Mr. Cromarty's place," answered Brixey.

"Which of them is it?" asked the Captain; "not Ada, eh?"

"Ada, indeed,—yes; here it is. Miss Ada Cromarty; do you know her?"

"Rather,—devilish nearly hooked there once; and it is Mistress Kilkee she'd been at this present time if I hadn't run against Ned Thistledown on the steps of the Cursaal at Wiesbaden;—the closest shave I ever had in my life, the Lord be thanked!"

"Closest shave!—eh?" cried Brixey, "if you had not run against Mr. Thistleton on the steps of Wiesbaden?"

"Yes," answered the Captain, "I'll tell you how it was. Ned and I met, as I told you, and as we had not seen one-another for a long time we went to dine together at his hotel. After telling me all about himself, he asked me what I was after at Wiesbaden—where I was bound, and so on. 'Oh, Ned!' says I, 'I'm the happiest fellow in the world: going to be married to the dearest of girls,' says I. 'Wish you joy, old fellow,' says he, 'we will drink her good health. By-the-bye, you have not told me her name yet.' 'Oh!' says I, 'Cromarty's her name now, but we'll change it to a prettier one on Wednesday.' 'Cromarty!' says he, —'is Cromarty the name,—did you say Cromarty?' 'Sure and it's Cromarty, I said,' says I. It would have done you good to hear the merry laugh Ned set up when I told him the dear creature's name. 'The Cromartys again, by all that 's preposterous,' says he. And off he went again into convulsions of laughter. But I took it up seriously: 'Pat,' says he, 'it isn't a bit of good looking detestable, you are not going to marry Miss Cromarty?' 'You'll see that,' says I, 'but first of all we have a little account to settle together.' 'Never mind the account,' says he, as cool as a cowcumber; 'I'll bet you a pony, Pat, the event does not come off.' 'What is to prevent it?' says I. 'When is it to come off?' says he. 'Wednesday,' says I. 'All right,'

says he, 'I will be your best man. Take an early opportunity of mentioning this little addition to the marriage-party, and mark the consequences.'"

"Lor' bless me!" said Brixey, "and what did you do?"

"Just mentioned in an off-hand way that I had had the good fortune to fall in with one of my oldest and best friends, Mr. Edward Thistledown, and that he had kindly consented to be my backer at the wedding. You never happened to 'assist,' as the French say, at an earthquake, or to be present at a dinner-party, when the epergne is knocked over by a cannon-ball; or to be in the room above the one in which a duel has been fought, when one of the gentlemen has generously fired in the air. Well, if you have not, you will scarcely be able to conceive the marvellous effect of this simple announcement of mine."

"But what happened?" asked Brixey.

"I lost the opportunity of becoming the husband of Miss Cromarty, for the family left Wiesbaden, bag and baggage, that very evening, leaving a short note for me, informing me that circumstances, over which they had no control, obliged them to return instantly to England."

"But what was the reason?" demanded Brixey.

"Oh! I know nothing, and Thistledown knew nothing against the girl. The fact is, after dining with the Cromarty's one day, *en famille*, he had found himself engaged, he did not know how, to one of the young ladies, and he did not know which until he was told it was the eldest one. Luckily for him he fell in with some fellow who put him up to the plant, and informed him, moreover, that old Cromarty was a sort of by-word at all the spas in Germany, where the dinner-dodge was beginning to get blown. Your friend is old enough to take care of himself, I hope," the Captain

proceeded; "poor Thistledown was very young and verdant, and his friends made a row and pulled him through."

"I must be off this moment," said Brixey in a tone of alarm; "you will, I know, excuse me—not a moment to lose—I will be back to you to-night."

"Perhaps," suggested the Captain, as Brixey trotted off on the pony to meet the conveyance he had sent for from Speytown, "perhaps, if you were to mention my name, or, by-the-bye, say that Ned Thistledown and I will be present at the ceremony."

Now, if Brixey had happened to look at the date of the letter, which caused this excitement, he would have discovered that it was ten days old. In Scotland, as well as in other parts of Great Britain and Ireland, letters will sometimes go wrong when they are not posted by the writer, and it happened in this particular case that it had been laid upon the hall-table at Rogie, as the custom was in that establishment.

It was on the afternoon of the twenty-ninth of September, that Brixey, full of care and anticipations of evil, found himself at the gates of Rogie. It was evident from the number of people idling about that some unusual event had happened. A group of villagers were standing staring, open-mouthed, at a splendid arch of evergreens and dahlias raised over the gate, surmounted by a striking flag of mysterious device. In the centre of this tasteful erection were to be seen the letters F. and C. cunningly interlaced, and immediately beneath there was a scroll on which were to be read the words—"May they be happy!"

Brixey's heart sank within him. On arriving at the house he had to wait while a genteel fly, which was standing at the door, was driven out of his way by a very important looking coachman who wore a huge white favour on

the breast of his great-coat. The servant in gorgeous livery who came to the door was similarly decorated, and before Brixey had time to collect himself, he was ushered into the dining-room just in time to find old Cromarty waving a white pocket-handkerchief and returning thanks in feeling language to a large company assembled at table for the honour done him in drinking his and Mrs. Cromarty's health, while the lady was sobbing convulsively.

Fribbles had been married that morning, and sat by the side of the bride, looking as foolish as many gentlemen similarly situated are apt to look.

"Well, now, this *is* kind—this *is* friendly," cried the master of the feast, rushing up to Brixey and shaking his hand with boisterous cordiality. "We had quite given you up—the *only thing* wanting to complete our happiness. Dear Peter was quite low about your absence; he has done nothing but go on about it. Make room, my love," he continued, addressing Mrs. Cromarty, "between you and dear Ada—Ada, dearest, this gentleman is Mr. Brixey, the much respected friend and late guardian of your husband. Oh! what a comfort it will be to you both to have his blessing. Make much of him now, my children. We have, I am pained to say, only a short quarter of an hour,—the train goes at 3.45."

Poor Brixey was utterly bewildered; he shook hands mechanically with Fribbles, and Mrs. Fribbles, and their mama, and the minister, and Pitsligo, and was making the round of the table, when he was fairly pushed into his chair to listen to the lamentations of Mrs. Cromarty for his late arrival. Eat he could not; but the restorative effect of a glass or two of champagne, forced upon him by his host, gave him back his presence of mind. His health was proposed by old Cromarty in a manner most flattering to

his feelings, the more so from the fact of that gentleman knowing so little of him personally, and it was drunk with enthusiasm by the entire party; and then he found himself on his legs returning thanks. Another glass or two made him better still; and at the suggestion of the lady of the house, he actually made a very pretty and telling speech, proposing the health of the four blushing bridesmaids, wherein he took occasion to hope that they might each and all of them be, at no remote period, in a position to require, on their own account, the same friendly office they were then discharging, and to wish, as in duty bound, that he were himself a younger man.

His good sense and good feeling suggested to him that it was now too late to repine—far better, in fact, to make the best of it; and the affectionate manner of the bride to her husband's old friend, had the effect of completely unsettling all his preconceived prejudices, if not convincing him that things were not so bad after all.

At length came the moment for the happy pair to make preparations for departure. Brixey had a short conversation with Fribbles, in the course of which it came out that the letter in his pocket ought to have been received many days before; he heard, too, that Fribbles's plan was to go first to Everton, to introduce the bride to his mother, and from thence to proceed to Paris.

The parting was touching in the extreme. Brixey was deeply affected by it, and reproached himself with having permitted himself to be carried away by any uncomfortable feelings of dislike to a family so loveable. Mama Cromarty fell sobbing into his arms, as the weeping bride was torn from her and handed into the neat fly by her papa. Fribbles, after having gone through the ceremony of handshaking all round, seated himself by her side; the door

was shut; and as they drove off, the prettiest of the bridesmaids threw an old shoe in at the window, which hit Fribbles on the nose; and this caused a laugh; and they all stood watching the fly till it was lost in the laurels.

Brixey declined the hospitable invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Cromarty to stay and eat his goose with them; and they saw him, with some satisfaction, take his departure. Very likely old Cromarty thought that it was sufficient to "cook one goose" on Michaelmas Day.

"It was very strange, Cromarty, that letter being so long on the road; I thought it had miscarried altogether," observed Mrs. Cromarty.

"Very unpardonable negligence on the part of the Post-office, my dear," replied Mr. Cromarty. "I shall take an early opportunity of writing to the 'Times' on the subject."

Brixey returned to Tommiebeg; and after Captain Kilkee left him, he began to find it very dull at the lodge; for he was of a turn decidedly gregarious. The days, too, were beginning to shorten—the mornings and evenings to become cold and comfortless. The grouse, too, were so wild there was no getting near them, and Brixey found this difficulty to be greatly increased from the circumstance of that steady old dog Blazer having taken the opportunity of his absence from home to bolt, which obliged him to take out Ponto; and the discursive habits of that dog were ill adapted to his style of shooting. So he decided on going south; and he got in his bills, and wrote to Mr. M'Snail to acquaint him of his intention of leaving Tommiebeg and giving up the lodge and furniture.

That gentleman was not slow in making his appearance; and it was then Brixey's equable temper was put to a rude proof by what he underwent at the hands of that sharp

practitioner. He discovered, in the first place, that he had been careless enough to engage himself to take the furniture at the rate agreed upon, *for a term of at least three months.* There was nothing to be said; *there* was "the writing," and appended to it was his signature. But this was not so galling to him as the critical manner in which the countless articles in the inventory were overhauled. Trusting in the good faith of Mr. M'Snail, he had neglected going through the list of things on taking possession, and he had now to regret his misplaced confidence. The dilapidations were awful: such breakages—such cracks and chips in the dishes and plates, and crockery and glass! So many articles missing, too—what could have become of them? There they were, plainly set down in detail in the list; but now they were nowhere.

It went sadly against the grain of the fair-dealing liberal-minded victim to accompany Mr. M'Snail on this minute inspection of the furniture—going through the inventory, as it is technically termed—to see him handle and examine closely the meanest and commonest kitchen utensils and crockery; and, as he set a mark against it in his list, to hear him complaining of the "untenty doins o' thae twa skelping jinketting hizzies," meaning thereby the poor maid-servants, who, being dependent on Mr. M'Snail for his recommendations past and future, were obliged to take complacently all the bad language he lavished on them. Every lock on every door was tried, and two or three which had never been used turned out to be "waefully damaged.'

Brixey's patience being at length well-nigh exhausted by this prolonged scrutiny, he ventured to suggest to Mr. M'Snail that he was giving himself a vast deal of useless trouble and wasting much valuable time.

"Eh, sir!" replied that conscientious gentleman; "it

is just the verra reverse o' that, I'm thinking; it is yoursel that's sae steery and fashious aboot the things. Sir Tydley Wynke—eh! he was a fine man, Sir Tydley Wynke, and was no for glowering and groaning o'er the inventory."

"But what did that gentleman do?" asked Brixey, in the fond hope of having a bright example set before him for his guidance.

"Eh—gude sir! He just verra parteecularly damned mysel and the inventory and a' Tommiebeg thegither, and garred me pit down the hail in a lump."

Without adding the condemnatory conditions, Brixey was only too glad to submit to the same arrangement, in order to get over a business which it seemed Mr. M'Snail's object was to protract indefinitely. Naturally, this generous confidence in that gentleman's integrity met with the reward which might be expected from such liberality. Mr. M'Snail, foreseeing the improbability of ever again meeting his client on the same ground, did not fail to make the most of him; but though he was soon in receipt of a cheque, the amount of which was sufficient to have bought the furniture of the lodge twice over, he felt most acutely how that Captain Downey had been beforehand with him, and had got a slice out of his cake.

It is always painful to leave a spot in which we have been happy for a time; and, notwithstanding the irritation experienced by Brixey at the cupidity and hard-dealing of Mr. M'Snail, it was with a feeling of sorrow he left Tommiebeg, carrying with him the good wishes of ever, one with whom he had had to do about the place. He was touched even by the parting wag of Ponto's tail, though up to this moment he had looked upon that animal with no great affection, and had made him a present to Sandy.

He had accomplished the great purpose of his expedition to Scotland: he had completely recovered his health and strength; and while by this, his first experience of Highland life, he had created for himself a pleasurable souvenir, he had at the same time discovered a source of future enjoyment.

Fribbles's marriage still preyed upon his mind, however. He could not altogether absolve himself from blame in not having looked better after the young man, to whom he could not help fancying himself still the responsible guardian. With something of apprehension, he took Everton on his way homeward; the happy couple had already left it, and he had the satisfaction of finding the dowager Mrs. Fribbles perfectly enchanted with her daughter-in-law, and fully convinced that Peter had done a very clever thing.

Tommiebeg may, we dare say, be seen occasionally in "Snowie's List of Shooting Quarters," or in the second page of "The Field," in company with many other highly respectable moors which set forth as many or more attractions. It is but natural that the proprietor, or agent, or factor, should use every legitimate endeavour to put his place before "intending offerers" in showy colours; nor would we quarrel even if a slight dash of poetry lent a charm to the elaborate compositions we sometimes see in the shape of advertisements. Moreover, as every man has a right to ticket his own goods, no customer can fairly complain, if he chooses to put a high price upon his moor, or forest, or fishing.

But we would say to such of our readers as may not already have gathered as much from our book, and who purpose renting a moor in Scotland, *Take nothing upon credit*—or you will be *done*, as Mr. Weller would say,

"like roast pigeon." Examine for yourself the ground, the lodge, the furniture and fittings in detail—the river—the loch—and the means of communication. Meet the factor with his own weapons. Take no verbal promise whatever. Have everything, however insignificant it appear, upon paper—or you will be *done*. The first trouble is the least. It is the carelessness and recklessness of the Southern renter of the Highland Shooting which first allowed, and now gives full play to the system of over-reaching and deception to which he is subjected, and which at last has become proverbial.

To those who will not take any trouble in the matter, we append here a moral—adapted from Burns—

Now wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mither's son tak' heed :
Whene'er to *muirs* you are inclined,
Or *grouse* and *deer* run in your mind ;
Think ye may buy the joys o'er dear,
Remember Tam O'Shanter's mare !

THE END.

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